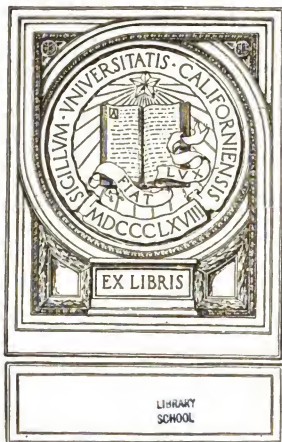


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BOOKS AND READING

BOOKS and READING

COMPILED BY
ROSCOE CROSBY GAIGE
AND
ALFRED HARCOURT

1908
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BOOKS AND READING

BY WAY OF PREFACE

"Some said, John, print it ; others said, Not so :
Some said, It might do good ; others said, No."

— JOHN BUNYAN.

PREFACING

ROBERT SOUTHEY

YET still the author keeps to his old and wonted method of prefacing; when at the beginning of the book he enters, either with a halter about his neck, submitting himself to his reader's mercy whether he shall be hanged, or no; or else in a huffing manner he appears with the halter in his hand, and threatens to hang his reader, if he gives him not his good word. This, with the excitement of some friends to his undertaking, and some few apologies for want of time, books, and the like, are the constant and usual shams of all scribblers as well ancient as modern. — *Commonplace Book.*

AN AUTHOR'S WISH

IZAAK WALTON

I MIGHT say more, but it is not fit for this place; but if this Discourse which follows shall come to a second impression, which is possible, for slight books have been in this Age observed to have that fortune; I shall then for thy sake be glad to correct what is faulty, or by a conference with any to explain or enlarge what is defective: but for this

time I have neither a willingness nor leisure to say more, than wish thee a *rainy evening* to read this book in, and *that the east wind may never blow when thou goest a fishing*. Farewell.

— *The Compleat Angler*.

FRIENDS OF A FEW

AGNES REPPLIER

IF the unresponsive gods, so often invoked, so seldom complaisant, would grant me one sweet boon, I should ask of them that I might join that little band of authors, who, unknown to the wide careless world, remain from generation to generation the friends of a few fortunate readers. Such authors have no conspicuous foothold among those opulent, symmetrical volumes that stand on drill in rich men's libraries, as well uniformed and as untried as a smart militia regiment. They have been seldom seen in the lists of the hundred best books. The committees who select reading matter for their native towns are often unacquainted with their titles. The great department stores of our great cities never offer them to the great public in twenty-five-cent editions. Yet they live for centuries a tranquil life of dignified seclusion. When they are lifted down from their remote corners on the bookshelves, it is with a friendly touch. The hands that hold

them caress them. The eyes that glance over them, smile at the familiar pages. Their readers feel for them a personal sentiment, approaching them with mental ease, and with a sweet and certain intimacy of companionship. These authors grow very shabby as the years roll by, and sometimes — though rarely — a sympathetic publisher turns his attention from the whirling vortex of new books, and gives them a fresh outfit; presents them — if he has a generous soul — with the clearest of type, the finest of paper, the richest and most appropriate of bindings. So embellished, they enjoy little dignified triumphs of their own, and become the cherished property of that ever diminishing minority who, by some happy turn of fate, are fitted to enjoy the pleasure which literary art can give.

— *Introduction to Familiar Letters*
of James Howell.

TWO CLASSES OF PEOPLE

N. G. ROYDE SMITH

PEOPLE are divided into two classes: those who put out the light before getting into bed, and those who get into bed before putting out the light. It is to members of the latter class that this little book is offered.

The "Pillow Book" contains no plot to lure them from page to page until the candle gutters and dies evilly, but, in a little room, treats of many matters suitable for night thoughts, disclaiming neither the comfortable platitude nor the human chuckle. In it the pillow reader will surely find passages taken and left from the pillow books of his own selection, together with gleanings he has never seen. It is not heavy to hold, and, when the time for putting out the light comes, it is of a size to be slipped underneath the pillow and be forgotten in dreams. — *The Pillow Book*.

A BOOK FOR A CORNER

LEIGH HUNT

THIS compilation is intended for all lovers of books, at every time of life, from childhood to old age, particularly such as are fond of the authors it quotes, and who enjoy their perusal most in the quietest places. It is intended for the boy or girl who loves to get with a book into a corner — for the youth who on entering life finds his advantage in having become acquainted with books — for the man in the thick of life, to whose spare moments books are refreshments — and for persons in the decline of life, who reflect on what they have experienced, and to whom books and gardens afford their tranquiler pleasures.

It is a book (not to say it immodestly) intended to lie in old parlour windows, in studies, in cottages, in cabins aboard ship, in country-inns, in country-houses, in summer-houses, in any houses that have wit enough to like it, and are not the mere victims of a table covered with books for show.

When Shenstone was a child, he used to have a new book brought him from the next country-town, whenever any body went to market. If he had gone to bed and was asleep, it was put behind his pillow; and if it had been forgotten, and he was awake, his mother (more kindly than wisely) "wrapped up a piece of wood of the same form, and pacified him for the night." This is the sort of child we hope to be a reader of our volumes.

When Gray and Walpole were at Eton, they partitioned out the fields into territories of which they had read in books, and so ruled over them and sent ambassadors to one another. These are the sort of school-boys we look to entertain.

When Mrs. Inchbald, who was a farmer's daughter, first came to London, she was alone, and would have been subjected to no small perils but for the knowledge she had acquired from books; for she was poor, lovely, and sensitive. She turned the knowledge to the greatest account, and lived to add precious matter to the stock. We flatter ourselves, or rather we dare to aver, considering

the authors who furnish our extracts, that nobody would have more approved of our book than Mrs. Inchbald.

Some of the most stirring men in the world, persons in the thick of business of all kinds, and indeed with the business of the world itself on their hands, — Lorenzo de Medici, for instance, who was at once the great merchant and political arbiter of his time, — have combined with their other energies the greatest love of books, and found no other recreation at once so wholesome and so useful. We hope many a man of business will refresh himself with the short pieces in these volumes, and return to his work the fitter to battle craft, and yet retain a reverence for simplicity.

“Books, Venus, books.” It is those that teach us to refine on our pleasures when young, and which, having so taught us, enable us to recall them with satisfaction when old. For let the half-witted say what they will of delusions, no thorough reader ever ceased to believe in his books, whatever doubts they might have taught him by the way. They are pleasures too palpable and habitual for him to deny. The habit itself is a pleasure. They contain his young dreams and his old discoveries; all that he has lost, as well as all that he has gained; and, as he is no surer of the gain than of the loss, except in proportion to the strength of his perceptions, the

dreams, in being renewed, become truths again. He is again in communion with the past; again interested in its adventures, grieving with its griefs, laughing with its merriment, forgetting the very chair and room he is sitting in. Who, in the mysterious operation of things, shall dare to assert in what unreal corner of time and space that man's mind is; or what better proof he has of the existence of the poor goods and chattels about him, which at that moment (to him) are non-existent? "Oh!" people say, "but he wakes up, and sees them there." Well; he woke *down* then, and saw the rest. What we distinguish into dreams and realities, are, in both cases, but representatives of impressions. Who shall know what difference there is in them at all, save that of degree, till some higher state of existence help us to a criterion?

For our part, such real things to us are books, that, if habit and perception make the difference between real and unreal, we may say that we more frequently wake out of common life to *them*, than out of them to common life.

— *A Book for a Corner.*

WERE ANGELS TO WRITE

JOHN NORRIS

CONCERNING the Essays and Discourses, I have only this to say, that I designed in them as much Brevity and Clearness as are consistent with each other, and to abound in Sense rather than Words: I wish all Men would observe this in their Writings more than they do. I'm sure the multitude of Books, and the shortness of Life require it; and Sense will lie in a little compass, if Men would be persuaded to vent no Notions but what they are Masters of; and were Angels to write, I fancy we should have but few Folios. — *Miscellanies*.

MY BOOK AND HEART

“My book and heart must never part.”

— New England Primer.

BOOKS AND GARDENS

ALEXANDER SMITH

IN my garden I spend my days; in my library I spend my nights. My interests are divided between my geraniums and my books. With the flower I am in the present; with the book I am in the past. I go into my library, and all history unrolls before me. I breathe the morning air of the world while the scent of Eden's roses yet lingered in it, while it vibrated only to the world's first brood of nightingales, and to the laugh of Eve. I see the pyramids building; I hear the shoutings of the armies of Alexander; I feel the ground shake beneath the march of Cambyeses. I sit as in a theatre, — the stage is time, the play is the play of the world. What a spectacle it is! What kingly pomp, what processions file past, what cities burn to heaven, what crowds of captives are dragged at the chariot-wheels of conquerors! I hear or cry "Bravo" when the great actors come on shaking the stage. I am a Roman emperor when I look at a Roman coin, I lift Homer, and I shout with Achilles in the trenches. The silence of the unpeopled Syrian plains, the out-comings and in-goings of the pa-

triarchs, Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac in the fields at even-tide, Rebekah at the well, Jacob's guile, Esau's face reddened by desert sun-heat, Joseph's splendid funeral procession — all these things I find within the boards of my Old Testament. What a silence in those old books as of a half-peopled world — what bleating of flocks — what green pastoral rest — what indubitable existence! Across brawling centuries of blood and war, I hear the bleating of Abraham's flocks, the tinkling of the bells of Rebekah's camels. O men and women, so far separated yet so near, so strange yet so well-known, by what miraculous power do I know ye all! Books are the true Elysian fields where the spirits of the dead converse, and into these fields a mortal may venture unappalled. What king's court can boast such company? What school of philosophy such wisdom? The wit of the ancient world is glancing and flashing there. There is Pan's pipe, there are the songs of Apollo. Seated in my library at night, and looking on the silent faces of my books, I am occasionally visited by a strange sense of the supernatural. They are not collections of printed pages, they are ghosts. I take one down and it speaks with me in a tongue not now heard on earth, and of men and things of which it alone possesses knowledge. I call myself a solitary, but sometimes I think I misapply the term. No man sees

more company than I do. I travel with mightier cohorts around me than ever did Timour or Genghis Khan on their fiery marches. I am a sovereign in my library, but it is the dead, not the living that attend my levees. — *Dreamthrop*.

CONGREVE AND COFFEE

WILLIAM HAZLITT

THE greatest pleasure in life is that of reading, while we are young. I have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps anyone. As I grow older, it fades; or else the stronger stimulus of writing takes off the edge of it. At present I have neither time nor inclination for it: yet I should like to devote a year's entire leisure to a course of the English Novelists; and perhaps clap on that sly old knave, Sir Walter, to the end of the list. It is astonishing how I used formerly to relish the style of certain authors, at a time when I myself despaired of ever writing a single line. Probably this was the reason. It is not in mental as in natural ascent — intellectual objects seem higher when we survey them from below, than when we look down from any given elevation above the common level. My three favourite writers about the time I speak of were Burke, Junius, and Rousseau. I was never weary of admiring and wondering at the felicities of the

style, the turns of expression, the refinements of thoughts and sentiment: I laid the book down to find out the secret of so much strength and beauty, and took it up again in despair, to read on and admire. So I passed whole days, months, and, I may add, years; and have only this to say now, that as my life began, so I could wish that it may end. The last time I tasted this luxury in its full perfection was one day after a sultry day's walk in summer between Farnham and Alton. I was fairly tired out; I walked into an inn-yard (I think at the latter place); I was shown by the waiter to what looked at first like common outhouses at the other end of it, but they turned out to be a suite of rooms, probably a hundred years old — the one I entered opened into an old-fashioned garden, embellished with beds of larkspur and a leaden Mercury; it was wainscotted, and there was a grave-looking, dark-coloured portrait of Charles II hanging over the tiled chimney-piece. I had "Love for Love" in my pocket, and began to read; coffee was brought in in a silver coffee-pot; the cream, the bread and butter, everything was excellent, and the flavour of Congreve's style prevailed over all. I prolonged the entertainment till a late hour, and relished this divine comedy better even than when I used to see it played by Miss Mellon, as *Miss Prue*; Bob Palmer, as *Tattle*; and Bannister, as honest *Ben*. This circumstance

happened just five years ago, and it seems like yesterday. If I count my life so by lustres, it will soon glide away; yet I shall not have to repine, if, while it lasts, it is enriched with a few such recollections! — *Ireland's Selections from Hazlitt.*

MY LIBRARY AND HABITS THEREIN

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE

THESE two commerces (friendship and love) are fortuitous, and depending upon others; the one is troublesome by its rarity, the other withers by age; so that they could never have been sufficient for the business of my life. That of books, which is the third, is much more certain, and much more our own; it yields all other advantages to the other two; but has the constancy and facility of its service for its own share. It goes side by side with me in my whole course, and everywhere is assisting to me; it comforts me in my age and solitude; it eases me of a troublesome weight of idleness, and it delivers me at all hours from company that I dislike; and it blunts the point of griefs if they are not extreme, and have not got an entire possession of my soul. To divert myself from a troublesome fancy 'tis but to run to my books; they presently fix me to them, and drive the other out of my thoughts; and do not mutiny at seeing I have only recourse to them for

want of other more real, natural, and lively conveniences; they always receive me with the same kindness. "He may well go a-foot," say they, "who leads his horse in his hand;" and 'our James, King of Naples and Sicily, who, handsome, young, and healthy, caused himself to be carried up and down on a hand-barrow, reclining on a pitiful feather pillow, and clad in a robe of coarse gray cloth, with a cap of the same, but attended nevertheless by a royal train of litters, led horses of all sorts, gentlemen and officers, therein showed but a weak and unsteady austerity; the sick man is not to be pitied who has his cure in his sleeve. In the experience and practice of this sentence, which is a very true one, all the benefit I reap from books consists; and yet I make as little use of it almost as those who know it not; I enjoy it as a miser does his money, in knowing that I may enjoy it when I please; my mind is satisfied with this right of possession. I never travel without books, either in peace or war; and yet I sometimes pass over several days, and sometimes months, without looking at them; I will read by and by, say I to myself, or tomorrow, or when I please, and time meanwhile steals away without any inconvenience; for it is not to be imagined to what degree I please myself, and rest content in this consideration, that I have them by me, to divert myself with them when I am so

disposed, and call to mind what an ease and assistance they are to my life. 'Tis the best viaticum I have yet found out for this human journey, and I very much pity those men of understanding who are unprovided with it. I rather accept of any sort of diversion, how light soever, in the feeling that this can never fail me.

When at home, I a little more frequent my library from whence I at once survey all the whole concerns of my family. As I enter it, I thence see under me my garden, court, and base-court, and into all the parts of the building. There I turn over now one book, and then another, of various subjects, without method or design. One while I meditate; another I record, and dictate as I walk to and fro, such whimsies as these with which I here present you. 'Tis in the third story of a tower, of which the ground-room is my chapel, the second story an apartment with a withdrawing-room and closet, where I often lie to be more retired; above it is this great wardrobe, which formerly was the most useless part of the house. In that room I pass away most of the days of my life, and most of the hours of the day; in the night I am never there. There is within it a cabinet handsome and neat enough, with a very convenient fireplace for the winter, and windows that afford a great deal of light, and very pleasant prospects; and were I not

afraid, less of the expense than of the trouble, that frights me from all business, I could very easily adjoin on either side, and on the same floor, a gallery of an hundred paces long, and twelve broad, having sound walls already raised for some other design, to the requisite height. Every place of retirement requires a walk; my thoughts sleep if I sit still; my fancy does not go by itself, my legs must move it; and all those that study without a book are in the same condition. The figure of my study is round, and has no more bare wall than what is taken up by my table and chair; so that the remaining parts of the circle present me a view of all my books at once, set upon five rows of shelves round about me. It has three noble and wide prospects, and is sixteen paces in diameter. I am not so continually there in winter; for my house is built upon an eminence, as its name imports, and no part of it is so much exposed to the wind and weather as that, which pleases me the better for being of troublesome access and a little remote, as well upon the account of exercise, as being also there more retired from the crowd. 'Tis there that I am in my kingdom, and there I endeavour to make myself an absolute monarch, and to sequester this one corner from all society, whether conjugal, filial, or social; elsewhere I have but verbal authority only, and of a confused essence. That man, in my opinion, is

very miserable, who has not at home where to be by himself, where to entertain himself alone, or to conceal himself from others. Ambition sufficiently plagues her votaries by keeping them always in show, like the statue in a market-place: *Magna servitus est magna fortuna*: "A great fortune is a great slavery." They have not so much as a retreat for the necessities of nature. I have thought nothing so severe in the austerity of life that our religions affect, as what I have observed in some of their orders; namely, to have a perpetual society of place by rule, and numerous assistants among them, in every action whatever; and think it much more supportable to be always alone, than never to be so.

If any one shall tell me that it is to degrade the muses to make use of them only for sport, and to pass away the time, I shall tell him that he does not know the value of that sport and pastime so well as I do; I can hardly forbear to add further, that all other end is ridiculous. I live from hand to mouth, and, with reverence be it spoken, only live for myself; to that all my designs tend, and in that terminate. I studied when young for ostentation; since, to make myself wise; and now for my diversion; never for gain. A vain and prodigal humour that I had after this sort of furniture, not only for supplying my own need, but moreover for ornament

and outward show, I have long ago quite abandoned.

Books have many charming qualities to such as know how to choose them; but every good has its ill; 'tis a pleasure that is not pure and unmixed any more than others; it has its inconveniences, and great ones too; the mind, indeed, is exercised by it, but the body, the care of which I have not forgotten, remains in the meantime without action, grows heavy and melancholy. I know no excess more prejudicial to me, nor more to be avoided in this my declining age.

These are my three favourite and particular occupations. I speak not of those which I owe to the world by civil obligations.

— *Essays; The Three Commerces.*

Translated by W. C. Hazlitt.

A DESULTORY READER'S REFORMATION

RICHARD STEELE

"Nihil legebat quod non excerperet." — Plin. Epis.

"He pick'd something out of everything he read."

"H^{AVING} been bred up under a relation that had a pretty large study of books, it became my province once-a-week to dust them. In the performance of this my duty, as I was obliged to take down every particular book, I thought there was no way to deceive the toil of my journey through the differ-

ent abodes and habitations of these authors but by reading something in every one of them; and in this manner to make my passage easy from the comely folio in the upper shelf or region, even through the crowd of duodecimos in the lower. By frequent exercises I became so great a proficient in this transitory application to books, that I could hold open half a dozen small authors in a hand, grasping them with as secure a dexterity as a drawer doth his glasses, and feasting my curious eyes with all of them at the same instant. Through these methods the natural irresolution of my youth was much strengthened, and having no leisure, if I had had inclination, to make pertinent observations in writing, I was thus confirmed a very early wanderer. When I was sent to Oxford, my chiefest expense run upon books, and my only consideration in such expense upon numbers, so that you may be sure I had what they call a choice collection, sometimes buying by the pound, sometimes by the dozen, at other times by the hundred. For the more pleasant use of a multitude of books, I had by frequent conferences with an ingenious joiner, contrived a machine of an orbicular structure, that had its particular receptions for a dozen authors, and which, with the least touch of the finger, would whirl round, and present the reader at once with a delicious view of its full furniture. Thrice a day

did I change, not only the books, but the languages; and had used my eye to such a quick succession of objects, that in the most precipitate twirl I could catch a sentence out of each author, as it passed fleeting by me. Thus my hours, days, and years, flew unprofitably away, but yet were agreeably lengthened by being distinguished with this endearing variety; and I cannot but think myself very fortunate in my contrivance of this engine, with its several new editions and amendments, which have contributed so much to the delight of all studious vagabonds. When I had been resident the usual time at Oxford that gains one admission into the public library, I was the happiest creature on earth, promising to myself most delightful travels through this new world of literature. Sometimes you might see me mounted upon a ladder, in search of some Arabian manuscripts, which had slept in a certain corner undisturbed for many years. Once I had the misfortune to fall from this eminence, and catching at the chains of the books, was seen hanging in a very merry posture, with two or three large folios rattling about my neck, till the humanity of Mr. Crab, the librarian, disentangled us.

“As I always held it necessary to read in public places, by way of ostentation, but could not possibly travel with a library in my pocket, I took the following method to gratify this errantry of mine.

I contrived a little pocket-book, each leaf of which was a different author, so that my wandering was indulged and concealed within the same enclosure.

"This extravagant humour, which should seem to pronounce me irrecoverable, had the contrary effect; and my hand and eye being thus confined to a single book, in a little time reconciled me to the perusal of a single author. However, I choose such a one as had as little connexion as possible, turning to the Proverbs of Solomon, where the best constructions are thrown together in the most beautiful range imaginable, and where I found all that variety which I had before sought in so many different authors, and which was so necessary to beguile my attention. By these proper degrees, I have made so glorious a reformation in my studies, that I can keep company with Tully in his most extended periods, and work through the continued narrations of the most prolix historian."

— *The Guardian*. Wednesday, May 20, 1713.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

SIR WALTER SCOTT

My tutor thought it almost a sin to open a profane play or poem; and my mother, besides that she might be in some degree trammelled by the religious scruples which he suggested, had

no longer the opportunity to hear me read poetry as formerly. I found, however, in her dressing-room (where I slept at one time), some odd volumes of Shakespeare, nor can I easily forget the rapture with which I sat up in my shirt reading them by the light of a fire in her apartment, until the bustle of the family rising from the supper warned me it was time to creep back to my bed, where I was supposed to have been safely deposited since nine o'clock.

— *Lockhart's Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott.*

ON OPENING A BUNDLE OF BOOKS

GEORGE GISSING

A DAY of almost continuous rain, yet for me a day of delight. I had breakfasted, and was poring over a map of Devon (how I love a good map!) to trace an expedition that I have in view, when a knock came at my door, and Mrs. M. bore in a great brown-paper parcel, which I saw at a glance must contain books. The order was sent to London a few days ago; I had not expected to have my books so soon. With throbbing heart I set the parcel on a clear table; eyed it whilst I mended the fire; then took my pen-knife, and gravely, deliberately, though with hand that trembled, began to unpack.

It is a joy to go through booksellers' catalogues, ticking here and there a possible purchase. Formerly, when I could seldom spare money, I kept catalogues as much as possible out of sight; now I savour them page by page, and make a pleasant virtue of the discretion I must needs impose upon myself. But greater still is the happiness of unpacking volumes which one has bought without seeing them. I am no hunter of rarities; I care nothing for first editions and for tall copies; what I buy is literature, food for the soul of man. The first glimpse of bindings when the inmost protective wrapper has been folded back! The first scent of *books!* The first gleam of a gilded title! Here is a work the name of which has been known to me for half a lifetime, but which I never yet saw; I take it reverently in my hand, gently I open it; my eyes are dim with excitement as I glance over chapter-headings, and anticipate the treat which awaits me. Who, more than I, has taken to heart that sentence of the *Imitatio*. "In omnibus requiem quaesivi et nusquam inveni nisi in angulo cum libro?"

I had in me the making of a scholar. With leisure and tranquillity of mind, I should have amassed learning. Within the walls of a college, I should have lived so happily, so harmlessly, my imagination ever busy with the old world. In the

introduction to his History of France, Michelet says: "*J'ai passé à côté du monde, et j'ai pris l'histoire pour la vie.*" That, as I can see now, was my true ideal; through all my battlings and miseries I have always lived more in the past than in the present. At the time when I was literally starving in London, when it seemed impossible that I should ever gain a living by my pen, how many days have I spent at the British Museum, reading as disinterestedly as if I had been without a care! It astounds me to remember that, having breakfasted on dry bread, and carrying in my pocket another piece of bread to serve for dinner, I settled myself at a desk in the great Reading-Room with books before me which by no possibility could be a source of immediate profit. At such a time I worked through German tomes on Ancient Philosophy. At such a time, I read Apuleius and Lucian, Petronius and the Greek Anthology, Diogenes Laertius and — heaven knows what! My hunger was forgotten; the garret to which I must return to pass the night never perturbed my thoughts. On the whole, it seems to me something to be rather proud of; I smile approvingly at that thin, white-faced youth. Me? My very self? No, no! He has been dead these thirty years.

Scholarship in the high sense was denied me,

and now it is too late. Yet here am I gloating over Pausanias, and promising myself to read every word of him. Who that has any tincture of old letters would not like to read Pausanias, instead of mere quotations from him and references to him? Here are the volumes of Dahn's *Die Könige der Germanen*: who would not like to know all he can about the Teutonic conquerors of Rome? And so on, and so on. To the end I shall be reading — and forgetting. Ah, that's the worst of it! Had I at command all the knowledge I have at any time possessed, I might call myself a learned man. Nothing surely is so bad for the memory as long-enduring worry, agitation, fear. I can preserve but a few fragments of what I read, yet read I shall, persistently, rejoicingly. Would I gather erudition for a future life? Indeed, it no longer troubles me that I forget. I have the happiness of the passing moment, and what more can mortal ask? — *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.*

ON READING NOVELS

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

I THINK my time better employed in reading the adventures of imaginary people, than the Duchess of Marlborough's, who passed the latter years of her life in paddling with her will, and contriving

schemes of plaguing some, and extracting praise from others, to no purpose; eternally disappointed, and eternally fretting. The active scenes are over at my age. I indulge, with all the art I can, my taste for reading. If I would confine it to valuable books, they are almost as rare as valuable men. I must be content with what I can find. As I approach a second childhood, I endeavour to enter into the pleasures of it. Your youngest son is, perhaps, at this very moment riding on a pooker with great delight, not at all regretting that it is not a gold one, and much less wishing it an Arabian horse, which he would not know how to manage. I am reading an idle tale, not expecting wit or truth in it, and am very glad it is not metaphysics to puzzle my judgment, or history to mislead my opinion. He fortifies his health by exercise; I calm my cares by oblivion. The methods may appear low to busy people; but, if he improves his strength, and I forget my infirmities, we attain very desirable ends. — *Lady Montagu's Letters.*

TRUE KINGS

DEAN HOLE

YES, my brothers, it is delightful to dwell "with brains, sir," condensed in books in that glorious world — a library — a world which we can traverse

without being sick at sea, or footsore on land; in which we can reach the heights of science without leaving our easy chair, hear the nightingales, the poets, with no risk of catarrh, survey the great battlefields of the world unscathed; a world in which we are surrounded by those who, whatever their temporal rank may have been, are its true kings and real nobility, and which places within our reach a wealth more precious than rubies, for all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with it.

In this happy world I met Washington Irving, Fenimore Cooper, Hawthorne, Willis, Longfellow, Whittier, and all your great American authors, historical, poetical, pathetic, humorous, and ever since I have rejoiced to hold converse with them. Nevertheless, it is with our living companions, with our fellow-men, who love books, as we do, that this fruition is complete, and so it comes to pass, in the words of one whose name I speak with a full heart, Oliver Wendell Holmes, that "a dinner table made up of such material as this is the last triumph of civilization over barbarism."

— *Eccentricities of Genius* by

Major J. B. Pond.

READING TO THE BAKER

WILLIAM CHAMBERS

IN the winter of 1815-16, when the cold and cost of candle-light would have detained me in bed, I was so fortunate as to discover an agreeable means of spending my mornings. The sale of lottery tickets, I have said, formed a branch of my employer's business. Besides distributing the lottery circulars, it fell to my lot to paste all the large show-boards with posters of glaring colours, bearing the words "Lucky Office," "Twenty Thousand Pounds still in the Wheel," and such-like seductive announcements. The board carriers — shilling-a-day men — were usually a broken-down set of characters; as, for example, old waiters and footmen, with pale flabby faces and purple noses; discharged soldiers, who had returned in a shattered condition from the wars; and tattered operatives of middle age, ruined by dram-drinking.

Among the last-named class of board-carriers, there was a journeyman baker who had an eye irretrievably damaged by some rough, but possibly not unprovoked, usage on a king's birthday riot. What from the bad eye, and what from whiskey, this unfortunate being had fallen out of regular employment. Now and then when there was a push in the trade, as at the New Year, he got a

day's work from his old employer, a baker in Canal Street. He was not at all nice as to occupation: he would deliver handbills, perambulate the streets with a lottery-board at the top of a pole over his shoulder, or anything else that cast up, only he needed a little watching, for, when out on a job with the relics of the previous day's shilling in his pocket, he was prone to thirstiness in passing a dram-shop, into which he would dive, board and all, regardless of consequences.

From this hopeful personage, whom it was my duty to look after, I one day had a proposition, which he had been charged to communicate. If I pleased, he would introduce me to his occasional employer, the baker in Canal Street, who, he said, was passionately fond of reading, but without leisure for its gratification. If I would go early, very early, say five o'clock in the morning, and read aloud to him and his two sons, while they were preparing their batch, I should be regularly rewarded for my trouble with a penny roll newly drawn from the oven. Hot rolls, as I have since learned, are not to be recommended for the stomach, but I could not in these times afford to be punctilious. The proposal was too captivating to be resisted. Behold me, then, quitting my lodgings in the West Port, before five o'clock in the winter mornings, and pursuing my way across the town

to the cluster of sunk streets below the North Bridge, of which Canal Street was the principal. The scene of operations was a cellar of confined dimensions, reached by a flight of steps descending from the street, and possessing a small back window immediately beyond the baker's kneading-board. Seated on a folded-up sack in the sole of the window, with a book in one hand and a penny candle stuck in a bottle near the other, I went to work for the amusement of the company. The baker was not particular as to subject. All he stipulated for was something droll and laughable. Aware of his tastes, I tried him first with the Jocularities of "Roderick Random," which was a great success, and produced shouts of laughter, I followed this up with other works of Smollet, also with the novels of Fielding, and with "Gil Blas"; the tricks and grotesque rogueries in this last-mentioned work of fiction giving the baker and his two sons unqualified satisfaction. My services as a reader for two and a half hours every morning were unfailingly recompensed by a donation of the anticipated roll, with which, after getting myself brushed of the flour, I went on my way to shop-opening, lamp-cleaning and all the rest of it, at Calton Street.

— *Memoir of Robert Chambers with Autobiographic Reminiscences of William Chambers*

HAPPY POVERTY

CHARLES LAMB

I WAS pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon), some of these *speciosa miracula* upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using; and could not help remarking, how favourable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort — when a passing sentiment seemed to over-shade the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

“I wish the good old times would come again,” said she, “when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean, that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state;” — so she was pleased to ramble on, — “in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that

would be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

“Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare — and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker’s in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o’clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late — and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards), lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures — and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome — and when you presented it to me — and when we were exploiting the perfectness of it (*collating* you called it) — and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till day-break — was there no pleasure in being a poor man! or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity, with which you flaunted

it about in that over-worn suit — your old corbeau — for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen — or sixteen shillings was it? — a great affair we thought it then — which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now. — *Last Essays of Elia.*

ON READING MILTON

ALEXANDER SMITH

READING Milton is like dining off gold plate in a company of kings; very splendid, very ceremonious, and not a little appalling. Him I read but seldom, and only on high days and festivals of the spirit. Him I never lay down without feeling my appreciation increased for lesser men — never without the same kind of comfort that one returning from the presence feels when he doffs respectful attitude and dress of ceremony, and subsides into old coat, familiar arm-chair, and slippers.

— *Dreamthrop.*

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

“I am a stranger to you, and you to me ; if you be going this way, I shall be glad of your company.”—JOHN BUNYAN.

THE BOOKLESS MAN

J. N. LARNED

BUT there are people who may assent to all that is said of education in this lifelasting view of it, who will deny that there is a question in it of books. "We," they say, "find more for our instruction in life than in books. The reality of things interests us more and teaches us more than the report and description of them by others. We study men among men and God's works in the midst of them. We prefer to take knowledge at first hand, from nature and from society, rather than second-handedly, out of a printed page. Your book-wisdom is from the closet and for closet-use. It is not the kind needed in a busy and breezy world." Well, there is a half-truth in this which must not be ignored. To make everything of books in the development of men and women is a greater mistake, perhaps, than to make nothing of them. For life has teachings, and nature out of doors has teachings, for which no man, if he misses them, can find compensation in books. We can say that frankly to the contemner of books and we yield no ground in doing so; for then we turn upon him and say: "Your life, sir, to which you look for all

the enlightenment of soul and mind that you receive, is a brief span of a few tens of years; the circle of human acquaintances in which you are satisfied to make your whole study of mankind is a little company of a few hundred men and women, at the most; the natural world from which you think to take sufficient lessons with your unassisted eyes is made up of some few bits of city streets and country lanes and seaside sands. What can you, sir, know of life, compared with the man who has had equal years of breath and consciousness with you, and who puts with that experience some large, wide knowledge of seventy centuries of human history in the whole round world besides? What can you know of mankind and human nature compared with the man who meets and talks with as many of his neighbours in the flesh as yourself, and who, beyond that, has companionship and communion of mind with the kingly and queenly ones of all the generations that are dead? What can you learn from nature compared with him who has Darwin and Dana and Huxley and Tyndall and Gray for his tutors when he walks abroad, and who, besides the home-rambling which he shares with you, can go bird-watching with John Burroughs up and down the Atlantic states, or roaming with Thoreau in Maine woods, or strolling with Richard Jefferies in English lanes and fields?"

Truth is, the bookless man does not understand his own loss. He does not know the leanness in which his mind is kept by want of the food which he rejects. He does not know the starving of imagination and of thought he has inflicted upon himself. He has suffered his interest in the things which make up God's knowable universe to shrink until it reaches no farther than his eyes can see and his ears can hear. The books which he scorns are the telescopes and reflectors and reverberators of our intellectual life, holding in themselves a hundred magical powers for the overcoming of space and time, and for giving the range of knowledge which belongs to a really cultivated mind. There is no equal substitute for them. There is nothing else which will so break for us the poor hobble of every-day sights and sounds and habits and tasks, by which our thinking and feeling are prone to be tethered to a little worn round.

— *Books, Culture, and Character.*

WHEN FRIENDS WEARY

A. BRONSON ALCOTT

NEXT to a friend's discourse, no morsel is more delicious than a ripe book, a book whose flavour is as refreshing at the thousandth tasting as at the first. Books when friends weary, conversation

flags, or nature fails to inspire. The best books appeal to the deepest in us and answer the demand. A book loses if wanting the personal element, gains when this is insinuated, or comes to the front occasionally, blending history with mythology.

My favourite books have a personality and complexion as distinctly drawn as if the author's portrait were framed into the paragraphs and smiled upon me as I read his illustrated pages. Nor could I spare them from my table or shelves, though I should not open the leaves for a twelvemonth; the sight of them, the knowledge that they are within reach, accessible at any moment, rewards me when I invite their company. Borrowed books are not mine while in hand. I covet ownership in the contents, and fancy that he who is conversant with these is the rightful owner, and moreover, that the true scholar owes to scholars a catalogue of his chosen volumes, that they may learn from whence his entertainment during leisure moments. Next to a personal introduction, a list of one's favourite authors were the best admittance to his character and manners. His library were not voluminous. He might specify his favourites on his fingers, and spare the printer's type.

"Books have many charming qualities to such as know how to choose them." And without Plutarch, no library were complete.

Can we marvel at his fame, or overestimate the surpassing merits of his writings? It seems as I read as if none before, none since, had written lives, as if he alone were entitled to the name of biographer, — such intimacy of insight is his, laying open the springs of character, and through his parallels portraying his times as no historian had done before: not Plato, even in the livelier way of dialogue with his friends. Then his morals are a statement of the virtues for all times. And I read the list of his lost writings, not without a sense of personal wrong done to me, with emotions akin to what the merchant might feel in perusing the bill of freight after the loss of his vessel. Hercules, Hesiod, Pindar, Leonidas, Scipio, Augustus, Claudius, Epaminondas, minds of mark, all these and other precious pieces gone to the bottom: his books on the Academy of Plato, the Philosophers, and many more of this imperial freight, to be read by none now. Still, there remains so much to be grateful for; so many names surviving to perpetuate virtue and all that is splendid in fame, with his own. I for one am his debtor, not for noble examples alone, but for portraits of the possibilities of virtue, and all that is dearest in friendship, in his attractive pages. It is good exercise, good medicine, the reading of his books, — good for to-day, as in times it was preceding ours, salutary reading for all times.

Montaigne also comes in for a large share of the scholar's regard. Opened anywhere, his page is sensible, marrowy, quotable. He may be taken up, too, and laid aside carelessly without loss, so inconsequent is his method, and he so careless of his wealth. Professing nature and honesty of speech, his page has the suggestions of the landscape, is good for striking out in any direction, suited to any mood, sure of yielding variety of information, wit, entertainment, — not to be commanded, to be sure, without grave abatements, to be read with good things growing side by side with things not such and tasting of the apple. Still, with every abatement, his book is one of the ripest and mellowest, and, bulky as it is, we wish there were more of it. He seems almost the only author whose success warrants in every stroke of his pen his right to guide it: he of the men of letters, the prince of letters; since writing of life, he omits nothing of its substance, but tells all with a courage unprecedented. His frankness is charming. So his book has indescribable attractions, being as it were a *Private Book*, — his diary self-edited, and offered with an honesty that wins his readers, he never having done bestowing his opulent hospitalities on him, gossiping sagely, and casting his wisdom in sport to any who care for it. Everywhere his page is alive and rewarding, and we are

disappointed at finding his book comes to an end like other books.

Lord Herbert's Autobiography is a like example of sincerity and naturalness. If he too often play the cavalier, and is of a temper that brooks not the suspicion of insult, he is equally eager to defend when friendship or humanity render it a duty. The brothers, Edward and George, were most estimable characters. To George how largely are we in debt for his sacred verses, the delight and edification of the saints where ever they are known. Add Vaughan and Crashaw. And making due allowance for the time when Herrick's verses were written, his temptation to suit the tastes of courtiers and kings, his volumes contain much admirable poetry, tempered with religious devotion. He wrote sweet and virtuous verse, with lines here and there that should not have been written. But he is an antidote to the vice in his lines, and may well have place in the scholar's library with Donne, Daniel, Cowley, Shakespeare and contemporaries.

If one would learn the titles and gain insight into the contents of the best books in our literature, let him track Coleridge in his readings and notes as these have been collected and published in his Literary Remains and Table Talk. He explored the wide field of literature and philosophy, and brought to light richer spoils than any scholar of

his time, or since. His reading was not only choice, but miscellaneous. Nothing of permanent value appears to have escaped his searching glance, and his criticisms on books are among the most valuable contributions to British letters. He knew how to read to get and give the substance of the book in sprightly comment and annotation on the text. His judgments are final and exhaustive. To follow him were an education in itself.

One's diary is attractive reading, and productive, if he have the art of keeping one.

Thoreau wrote in his:—

“I set down such choice experiences that my own writings may inspire me, and at last I may make wholes of parts. Certainly it is a distinct profession to rescue from oblivion and to fix the sentiments and thoughts which visit all men, more or less, generally, and that the contemplation of the unfinished picture may suggest its harmonious completion. Associate reverently and as much as you can with your loftiest thoughts. Each thought that is welcomed and recorded is a nest-egg by the side of which another will be laid. Thoughts accidentally thrown together become a frame in which more may be developed and exhibited. Perhaps this is the main value of a habit of writing or keeping a journal,—that is, we remember our best draught, and stimulate ourselves. My thoughts are my com-

pany. They have a certain individuality and separate existence, large personality. Having by chance recorded a few disconnected thoughts and then brought them into juxtaposition, they suggest a whole new field in which it is possible to labour and think. Thought begets thought. I have a commonplace-book for facts and another for poetry. But I find it difficult always to preserve the vague distinctions which I had in my mind, for the most interesting and beautiful facts are so much the more poetry, and that is their success. They are translated from earth to heaven. I see that if my facts were sufficiently vital and significant, perhaps transmuted more into the substance of the human mind, I should need but one book of poetry to contain them all.

"I do not know but thoughts written down thus in a journal might be printed in the same form with greater advantage than if the related ones were brought together into separate essays. They are allied to life, and can be seen by the reader not to be far-fetched; thus, more simple, less artful. I feel that in the other case, I should have a proper form for my sketches. Here facts and names and dates communicate more than we suspect. Whether the flower looks better in the nosegay than in the meadow where it grew, and we had to wet our feet to get it? Is the scholastic air any advantage?

Perhaps I can never find so good a setting for thoughts as I shall thus have taken them out of. The crystal never sparkles more brightly than in the cavern. The world have always liked best the fable with the moral. The children could read the fable alone. The grown-up read both. The truth so told has the best advantages of the most abstract statement, for it is not the less universally applicable. Where else will you ever find the true cement for your thoughts? How will you ever rivet them together without leaving the marks of your file?

"Yet Plutarch did not so. Montaigne did not so. Men have written travels in this form; but perhaps no man's daily life has been rich enough to be journalized. Yet one's life should be so active and progressive as to be a journey. But I am afraid to travel much, or to famous places, lest it might completely dissipate the mind. Then I am sure that what we observe at home, if we observe anything, is of more importance than what we observe abroad. The far-fetched is of least value. What we observe in travelling are to some extent the accidents of the body; but what we observe when sitting at home are in the same proportion phenomena of the mind itself. A wakeful night will yield as much thought as a long journey. If I try thoughts by their quality, not their quantity, I may find that a restless night will yield more than the longest journey."

These masterpieces, Thoreau's Diaries, are a choice mingling of physical and metaphysical elements. They show the art above art which was busied about their composition. They come near fulfilling the highest ends of expression; the things seen become parts of the describer's mind, and speak through his person. Quick with thought, his sentences are coloured and consolidated therein by his plastic genius. — *Concord Days*.

ON READING NEW BOOKS

WILLIAM HAZLITT

"And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?" — *Sterne*.

I CANNOT understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that had gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made that Sir Walter writes no more — that the press is idle — that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it

has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer; it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were like women, the worse for being old; that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another — that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge? Yet this might appear to be the inference. *Their* having read the work may be said to act upon us by sympathy, and the knowledge which so many other persons have of its contents deadens our curiosity and interest altogether. We set aside

the subject as one on which others have made up their minds for us (as if we really could have ideas in their heads), and are quite on the alert for the next new work, teeming hot from the press, which we shall be the first to read, criticise, and pass an opinion on. Oh, delightful! To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before — this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party or a few hours of a spare morning to.

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To be sure, there is something in the taste of the times; a modern work is expressly adapted to modern readers. It appeals to our direct experience, and to well-known subjects; it is part and parcel of the world around us, and is drawn from the same sources as our daily thoughts. There is, therefore, so far, a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day, though this is a different consideration from the mere circumstance of novelty. An author now alive has the right to calculate upon the living public; he cannot count upon the dead, nor look forward with much confidence to those that are unborn. Neither,

however, is it true that we are eager to read all new books alike; we turn from them with a certain feeling of distaste and distrust, unless they are recommended to us by some peculiar feature or obvious distinction.

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I have often been struck with the unreasonableness of the complaint we constantly hear of the ignorance and barbarism of former ages, and the folly of restricting all refinement and literary elegance to our own. We are, indeed, indebted to the ages that have gone before us, and could not well do without them. But in all ages there will be found still others that have gone before with nearly equal lustre and advantage, though, by distance and the intervention of multiplied excellence, this lustre may be dimmed or forgotten. Had it, then, no existence? We might, with the same reason, suppose that the horizon is the last boundary and verge of the round earth. Still, as we advance, it recedes from us; and so time from its storehouse pours out an endless succession of the productions of art and genius; and the farther we explore the obscurity, other trophies and other landmarks rise up. It is only our ignorance that fixes a limit—as the mist gathered round the mountain's brow makes us fancy we are treading the edge of the universe! Here was Eloise living

at a period when monkish indolence and superstition were at their height — in one of those that are emphatically called the *dark ages*, and yet, as she is led to the altar to make her last fatal vow, expressing her feelings in language quite natural to her, but from which the most accomplished and heroic of our modern females would shrink back with pretty and affected wonder and affright. The glowing and impetuous lines which she murmured, as she passed on, with spontaneous and rising enthusiasm, were engraven on her heart, familiar to her as her daily thoughts; her mind must have been full of them to overflowing, and at the same time enriched with other stores and sources of knowledge equally elegant and impressive; and we persist, notwithstanding this and a thousand similar circumstances, in indulging our surprise how people could exist, and see, and feel, in those days, without having access to our opportunities and acquirements, and how Shakespeare wrote long after, *in a barbarous age!* The mystery in this case is of our own making. We are struck with astonishment at finding a fine moral sentiment or a noble image nervously expressed in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth; not considering that, independently of nature and feeling, which are the same in all periods, the writers of that day, who were generally men of education and learning, had such

models before them as the one that has been just referred to — were thoroughly acquainted with those masters of classic thought and language, compared with whom, in all that relates to the artificial graces of composition, the most studied of the moderns are little better than Goths and Vandals. It is true we have lost sight of and neglected the former, because the latter have, in a great degree, superseded them, as the elevations nearest to us intercept those farthest off; but our not availing ourselves of this vantage-ground is no reason why our forefathers should not (who had not our superfluity of choice), and most assuredly they did study and cherish the precious fragments of antiquity, collected together in their time, “like sunken wreck and sunless treasures;” and while they did this, we need be at no loss to account for any examples of grace, or force, or dignity in their writings, if these must always be traced back to a previous source. One age cannot understand how another could subsist without its lights, as one country thinks every other must be poor for want of its physical productions. This is a narrow and superficial view of the subject: we should by all means rise above it. I am not for devoting the whole of our time to the study of the classics, or of any other set of writers, to the exclusion and neglect of nature; but I think we should turn our thoughts enough that

way to convince us of the existence of genius and learning before our time, and to cure us of an overweening conceit of ourselves, and of a contemptuous opinion of the world at large. Every civilised age and country (and of these there is not one, but a hundred) has its literature, its arts, its comforts, large and ample, though we may know nothing of them; nor is it (except for our own sakes) important that we should.

— *Ireland's Selections from Hazlitt.*

ON READING OLD BOOKS

WILLIAM HAZLITT

. . . I DO not altogether think the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two. I have more confidence in the dead than the living. Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes — one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance, writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish face, which spoils a delicate passage:—another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and charac-

ter, but does not quite come up to our expectations in print. All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. If you want to know what any of the authors were who lived before our time, and are still objects of anxious inquiry, you have only to look into their works. But the dust and smoke and noise of modern literature have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality. When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better) I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish, — turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. There is a want of confidence and security to second appetite. New-fangled books are also like made-dishes in this respect, that they are generally little else than hashes and *rifaccimenti* of what has been served up entire and in a more natural state at other times. Besides, in thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash, — but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face, — compare notes, and chat the hours away. It is true, we form dear friendships with such ideal guests —

dearer, alas! and more lasting, than those with our most intimate acquaintance. In reading a book which is an old favourite with me (say the first novel I ever read,) I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a critical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our conscious being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are landmarks and guides in our journey through life. They are pegs and loops on which we can hang up, or from which we can take down, at pleasure, the wardrobe of a moral imagination, the relics of our best affections, the tokens and records of our happiest hours. They are "for thought and remembrance!" They are like Fortunatus's Wishing-Cap — they give us the best riches — those of Fancy; and transport us, not over half the globe, but (which is better) over half our lives, at a word's notice.

My father Shandy solaced himself with *Bruscamille*. Give me for this purpose a volume of "*Peregrine Pickle*" or "*Tom Jones*." Open either of them anywhere — at the "*Memoirs of Lady Vane*," or the adventures at the masquerade with Lady Bellaston, or the disputes between Thwackum and

Square, or the escape of Molly Seagrim, or the incident of Sophia and her muff, or the edifying prolixity of her aunt's lecture — and there I find the same delightful, busy, bustling scene as ever, and feel myself the same as when I was first introduced into the midst of it. Nay, sometimes the sight of an odd volume of these good old English authors on a stall, or the name lettered on the back among others on the shelves of a library, answers the purpose, revives the whole train of ideas, and sets "the puppets dallying." Twenty years are struck off the list, and I am a child again. A sage philosopher, who was not a very wise man, said, that he should like very well to be young again, if he could take his experience along with him. This ingenious person did not seem to be aware, by the gravity of his remark, that the great advantage of being young is to be without this weight of experience, which he would fain place on the shoulders of youth, and which never comes too late with years. Oh! what a privilege to be able to let this hump, like Christian's burthen, drop off one's back, and transport oneself, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when "ignorance was bliss," and when we first got a peep at the raree-show of the world, through the glass of fiction — gazing at mankind, as we do at wild beasts in a menagerie, through the bars of their cages, — or at curiosities

in a museum, that we must not touch! For myself not only are the old ideas of the contents of the work brought back to my mind in all their vividness but the old associations of the faces and persons of those I then knew, as they were in their lifetime — the place where I sat to read the volume, the day when I got it, the feeling of the air, the fields, the sky — return, and all my early impressions with them. This is better to me — those places, those times, those persons, and those feelings that come across me as I retrace the story and devour the page are to me better far than the wet sheets of the last new novel from the Ballantyne press, to say nothing of the Minerva press in Leadenhall Street. It is like visiting the scenes of early youth. I think of the time “when I was in my father’s house, and my path ran down with butter and honey,” — when I was a little thoughtless child, and had no other wish or care but to con my daily task and be happy!

“Tom Jones,” I remember, was the first work that broke the spell. It came down in numbers once a fortnight, in Cooke’s pocket-edition, embellished with cuts. I had hitherto read only in school-books, and a tiresome ecclesiastical history (with the exception of Mrs. Radcliffe’s “Romance of the Forest”): but this had a different relish with it, — “sweet in the mouth,” though not “bitter

in the belly." It smacked of the world I lived in, and in which I was to live — and showed me groups, "gay creatures" not "of the element," but of the earth; not "living in the clouds," but traveling the same road that I did; some that had passed on before me, and others that might soon overtake me. My heart had palpitated at the thoughts of a boarding-school ball, or gala-day at Midsummer or Christmas: but the world I had found out in Cooke's edition of the "British Novelists" was to me a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day. The sixpenny numbers of this work regularly contrived to leave off just in the middle of a sentence, and in the nick of a story. With what eagerness I used to look forward to the next number, and open the prints! Ah! never again shall I feel the enthusiastic delight with which I gazed at the figures, and anticipated the story and adventures of Major Bath and Commodore Trunnion, of Trim and my Uncle Toby, of Don Quixote and Sancho and Dapple, of Gil Blas and Dame Lorenza Sephora, of Laura and the fair Lucretia, whose lips open and shut like buds of roses. To what nameless ideas did they give rise, — with what airy delights I filled up the outlines, as I hung in silence over the page! Let me still recall them, that they may breathe fresh life into me, and that I may live that birthday of thought and romantic pleasure over

again! Talk of the *ideal*! This is the only true ideal — the heavenly tints of Fancy reflected in the bubbles that float upon the spring-tide of human life.

“O Memory! shield me from the world’s poor strife,
And give those scenes thine everlasting life!”

. . . I remember, as long ago as the year 1798, going to a neighbouring town (Shrewsbury, where Farquhar had laid the plot of his “Recruiting Officer”), and bringing home with me, “at one proud swoop,” a copy of Milton’s “Paradise Lost,” and another of Burke’s “Reflections on the French Revolution” — both of which I have still; and I still recollect, when I see the covers, the pleasure with which I dipped into them as I returned with my double prize. I was set up for one while. That time is past “with all its giddy raptures,” but I am still anxious to preserve its memory “embalmed with odours.”

— *Ireland’s Selections from Hazlitt.*

DICTES

JOHN SELDEN

1. The giving a bookseller his price for his books, has this advantage; he that will do it, shall be sure to have the refusal of whatsoever comes to his hands, and so by that means get many things which other-

wise he should never have seen. So 'tis in giving a bawd her price.

2. In buying books or other commodities, it is not always the best rule to bid but half so much as the seller asks. Witness the country fellow, that went to buy two shove-groat shillings; they asked him three shillings, and he offered them eighteen-pence.

3. They counted the price of the books (Acts xix. 19), and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver; that is, so many sestertii, or so many three-half-pence of our money; about three hundred pound sterling.

4. Popish books teach and inform; what we know, we know much out of them. The fathers, church story, school-men, all may pass for popish books; and if you take away them, what learning will you leave? Besides, who must be judge? The customer or the waiter? If he disallows a book, it must not be brought into the kingdom; then lord have mercy upon all scholars! These puritan preachers, if they have anything good, they have it out of popish books, though they will not acknowledge it, for fear of displeasing the people. He is a poor divine that cannot sever the good from the bad.

5. It is good to have translations, because they serve as a comment, so far as the judgment of one man goes.

6. In answering a book, 'tis best to be short; otherwise he that I write against will suspect I intend to weary him, not to satisfy him. Besides in being long I shall give my adversary a huge advantage; somewhere or other he will pick a hole.

7. In quoting of books, quote such authors as are usually read; others you may read for your own satisfaction, but not name them.

8. Quoting of authors is mostly for matter of fact; and then I write them as I would produce a witness; sometimes for a free expression, and then I give the author his due, and gain myself praise by reading him.

9. To quote a modern Dutchman where I may use a classic author, is as if I were to justify my reputation, and I neglect all persons of note and quality that know me, and bring the testimonial of the scullion in the kitchen. — *Table Talk*.

OF KINGS' TREASURIES

JOHN RUSKIN

BUT granting that we had both the will and the sense to choose our friends well, how few of us have the power; or at least, how limited for most is the sphere of choice! Nearly all our associations are determined by chance or necessity, and restricted within a narrow circle. We cannot know whom we

would, and those whom we know we cannot have at our side when we most need them. All the higher circles of human intelligence are, to those beneath, only momentarily and partially open. We may by good fortune obtain a glimpse of a great poet, and hear the sound of his voice, or put a question to a man of science, and be answered good-humouredly. We may intrude ten minutes' talk on a cabinet minister, answered probably with words worse than silence, being deceptive, or snatch once or twice in our lives, the privilege of throwing a bouquet in the path of a princess or arresting the kind glance of a queen. And yet these momentary chances we covet, and spend our years and passions and powers in pursuit of little more than these; while, meantime, there is a society continually open to us of people who will talk to us as long as we like, whatever our rank or occupation, — talk to us in the best words they can choose, and of the things nearest their hearts. And this society, because it is so numerous and so gentle, and can be kept waiting round us all day long (kings and statesmen lingering patiently, not to grant audience, but to gain it), in those plainly furnished and narrow ante-rooms, our book-case shelves, — we make no account of that company, perhaps never listen to a word they would say, all day long.

You may tell me, perhaps, or think within your-

selves, that the apathy with which we regard this company of the noble, who are praying us to listen to them, and the passion with which we pursue the company probably of the ignoble, who despise us, or who have nothing to teach us, are grounded in this, — that we can see the faces of the living men; and it is themselves, and not their sayings, with which we desire to become familiar. But it is not so. Suppose you never were to see their faces; suppose you could be put behind a screen in the statesman's cabinet or the prince's chamber, would you not be glad to listen to their words, though you were forbidden to advance beyond the screen? And when the screen is only a little less folded in two instead of four, and you can be hidden behind the cover of the two boards that bind a book, and listen all day long, not to the casual talk, but to the studied, determined, chosen addresses of the wisest of men, — this station of audience and honourable privy council you despise!

But perhaps you will say that it is because the living people talk of things that are passing, and are of immediate interest to you, that you desire to hear them. Nay, that cannot be so; for the living people will themselves tell you about passing matters much better in their writings than in their careless talk. But I admit that this motive does influence you, so far as you prefer those rapid and ephemeral

writings to slow and enduring writings, — books, properly so-called. For all books are divisible into two classes, — the books of the hour, and the books of all time. Mark this distinction; it is not one of quality only. It is not merely the bad book that does not last and the good one that does; it is a distinction of species. There are good books for the hour, and good ones for all time; bad books for the hour, and bad ones for all time. I must define the two kinds before I go farther.

The good book of the hour, then, — I do not speak of the bad ones, — is simply the useful or pleasant talk of some person whom you cannot otherwise converse with, printed for you. Very useful often, telling you what you need to know; very pleasant often, as a sensible friend's present talk would be. These bright accounts of travels; good-humoured and witty discussions of questions; lively or pathetic story-telling in the form of novel; firm fact-telling, by the real agents concerned in the events of passing history, — all these books of the hour, multiplying among us as education becomes more general, are a peculiar possession of the present age. We ought to be entirely thankful for them, and entirely ashamed of ourselves if we make no good use of them. But we make the worst possible use if we allow them to usurp the place of true books; for, strictly speaking, they are not books

at all, but merely letters or newspapers in good print. Our friend's letter may be delightful or necessary to-day, — whether worth keeping or not, is to be considered. The newspaper may be entirely proper at breakfast time, but assuredly it is not reading for all day; so, though bound up in a volume, the long letter which gives you so pleasant an account of the inns and roads and weather last year at such a place, or which tells you that amusing story, or gives you the real circumstances of such and such events, however valuable for occasional reference, may not be in the real sense of the word a "book" at all, nor in the real sense to be "read." A book is essentially not a talked thing, but a written thing, and written not with a view of mere communication, but of permanence. The book of talk is printed only because its author cannot speak to thousands of people at once; if he could he would, — the volume is mere *multiplication* of his voice. You cannot talk to your friend in India; if you could, you would. You write instead; that is mere *conveyance* of voice. But a book is written, not to multiply the voice merely, not to carry it merely, but to perpetuate it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it; so far as he knows, no one else can say it. He is bound to say it clearly and

melodiously, if he may; clearly, at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing or group of things, manifest to him, — this the piece of true knowledge or sight which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down forever, engrave it on rock if he could, saying, "This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate and drank and slept, loved and hated like another. My life was as the vapour, and is not; but this I saw and knew, — this, if anything of mine is worth your memory." That is his "writing;" it is in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription or scripture. That is a "book."

Perhaps you think no books were ever so written?

But again, I ask you, do you at all believe in honesty or at all in kindness, or do you think there is never any honesty or benevolence in wise people? None of us, I hope, are so unhappy as to think that. Well, whatever bit of a wise man's work is honestly and benevolently done, that bit is his book, or his piece of art. It is mixed always with evil fragments, — ill-done, redundant, affected work. But if you read rightly, you will easily discover the true bits and those *are* the book.

Now, books of this kind have been written in all ages by their greatest men, — by great readers, great statesmen, and great thinkers. These are

all at your choice; and Life is short. You have heard as much before; yet have you measured and mapped out this short life and its possibilities? Do you know, if you read this, that you cannot read that; that what you lose to-day you cannot gain to-morrow? Will you go and gossip with your housemaid or your stable-boy, when you may talk with queens and kings; or flatter yourselves that it is with any worthy consciousness of your own claims to respect that you jostle with the hungry and common crowd for *entrée* here, and audience there, when all the while this eternal court is open to you, with its society, wide as the world, multitudinous as its days, — the chosen and mighty of every place and time? Into that you may enter always; in that you may take fellowship and rank accordingly to your wish; from that, once entered into it, you can never be an outcast but by your own fault; by your aristocracy of companionship there, your own inherent aristocracy will be assuredly tested, and the motives with which you strive to take high place in the society of the living, measured as to all the truth and sincerity that are in them, by the place you desire to take in this company of the dead.

“The place you desire,” and the place *you fit yourself for*, I must also say, because, observe, this court of the past differs from all living aristocracy

in this, — it is open to labour and to merit, but to nothing else. No wealth will bribe, no name overawe, no artifice deceive, the guardian of those Elysian gates. In the deep sense, no vile or vulgar person ever enters there. At the portieres of that silent Faubourg St. Germain, there is but brief question: "Do you deserve to enter? Pass. Do you ask to be the companion of nobles? Make yourself noble, and you shall be. Do you long for the conversation of the wise? Learn to understand it, and you shall hear it. But on other terms? — No. If you will not rise to us, we cannot stoop to you. The living lord may assume courtesy, the living philosopher explain his thought to you with considerate pain; but here we neither feign nor interpret. You must rise to the level of our thoughts if you would be gladdened by them, and share our feelings if you would recognise our presence."

— *Sesame and Lilies.*

WITH WISDOM AND METHOD

SIR ARTHUR HELPS

As the world grows older and as civilisation advances, there is likely to be more and more time given to reading. In several parts of the earth where mankind are more active, and where the proportion of those who need to labour by their

hands is less than in other countries, and likely to go on becoming less, the climate is such as to confine, if it does not repress, out-of-door amusements: and, in all climates, for the lovers of ease, the delicate in health, the reserved, the fastidious and the amusing, books are amongst the chief sources of delight, and such as will more probably intrench upon other joys and occupations that give way to them.

Notwithstanding this, the ethics of study, if I may use such a phrase, have been little considered; and those pursuits over which we might have more efficient control than most others, are left to chance as regards their origin, their conduct and their end.

It appears to me remarkable that this subject should have been so little touched upon. Other subjects which are akin to it, but yet very different, have been largely investigated. But you will not find in treatises on education, upon professions, or upon general knowledge of life, any connected considerations with regard to the ethics and methods of private study. Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* is treated as a book belonging to the learned; and, besides, it deals with universals rather than with particulars; indicates the sluggishness, the hinderances, and the course of the main rivers of knowledge; not busying itself with the local for-

tunes of small streams, retired rivulets and quiet pools, without which, however, these main rivers would float down no argosies toward the sea of time.

Gibbon says, "After a certain age, the new publications of merit are the sole food of the many." A sarcastic person would perhaps remark, that the words "of merit" might be omitted without injury to the truth of the sentence. But that would be too severe; for the publications of merit do mostly obtain some hearing in their own day, though a very disproportionate one to what they should have; as it is exceedingly difficult, even for highly-cultivated persons, to make good selection of the nascent fruits and flowers of literature amidst the rank herbage of the day.

Before entering upon the mode of managing study; or perhaps I ought to use the word reading instead of study (for it would be quite wrong to suppose that the following remarks apply to professed students only), it would be well to see what does really happen in life as regards the intellectual cultivation of most grown-up people. I ask them, is it not mainly dependent upon chance? The professional man, wearied with the cares and labours of his office or employment, when he comes home, takes up whatever book may happen to be the reading of his wife, or mother, or daughters:

and they, for women are often educated in a way to avoid method and intellectual strength of any kind, are probably contented with what the circulating library affords, and read according to the merest rumour and fashion of the present hour. Again, what is called light literature (how it has obtained or maintained that name is surprising) criticisms, scraps, tales, and the like, is nearly the sole intellectual food of many intelligent persons. Now, without undervaluing this kind of literature, which improved as it would be if addressed to a class of persons who were wont to read with wisdom and method, would be very serviceable to those persons; we cannot say but that to make such literature the staple of the mind is unworthy and frivolous in the extreme.

I believe, however, that many persons are aware how indifferently they are spending their time in the way they read at present; and I shall not labour any more at this part of the subject, but come at once to what appears to me the remedy for the evil; which is, that every man and every woman who can read at all, should adopt some definite purpose in their reading — should take something for the main stem and trunk of their culture, whence branches might grow out in all directions seeking light and air for the parent tree which, it is hoped, might end in becoming something useful and orna-

mental, and which, at any rate, all along, will have had life and growth in it.

I do not think that this is too great a talk for the humblest reader. At the same time I am not prepared to show how this purpose may be secured in all cases, which must be left to disposition, to what we call chance, to peculiar facilities of any kind afforded to the reader in any one direction. It is so in the choice of a career in life, which is not always determined by a rigid and wise choice, made at once and fully persevered in; but, on the contrary, there may be many false starts and, occasionally, abrupt changes; still there is such a thing for each man as a career which might be pursued with some method by him, and which would lead to what is called worldly success. So, in reading, it would be folly to attempt to lay down some process by which every man might ensure a main course of study for himself; but only let him have a just fear of desultory pursuits, and a wish for mental cultivation, and he may hope at some time or other to discern what it is fittest for him to do. And if he does not, but pursues any thing with method, there will be some reward for him, if not the highest.

If we consider what are the objects men pursue, when conscious of any object at all, in reading, they are these: amusement, instruction, a wish to

appear well in society, and a desire to pass away time. Now even the lowest of these objects is facilitated by reading with method. The keenness of pursuit thus engendered enriches the most trifling gain, takes away the sense of dulness in details, and gives an interest to what would, otherwise, be most repugnant. No one who has ever known the eager joy of some intellectual pursuit can understand the full pleasure of reading.

In considering the present subject, the advantage to the world in general, of many persons being really versed in various subjects cannot be passed by. And were reading wisely undertaken, much more method and order would be applied to the consideration of the immediate business of the world; and there would be men who might form something of a wise public with regard to the current questions of the day, such as railways, politics, finance, and the condition of Ireland.

It must not be supposed that this choice and maintenance of one or more subjects of study must necessarily lead to pedantry or narrowness of mind. The Arts are sisters, Languages are close kindred; Sciences are fellow workmen: almost every branch of human knowledge is immediately connected with biography; biography falls into history, which, after drawing into itself various minor streams, such as geography, jurispru-

dence, political and social economy, issues forth upon the still deeper waters of general philosophy. There are very few, if any, vacant spaces between various kinds of knowledge: any track in the forest, steadfastly pursued, leads into one of the great highways; just as you often find, in considering the story of any little island, that you are perpetually brought back into the general history of the world, and that this small rocky place has partaken the fate of mighty thrones and distant empires. In short, all things are so connected together, that a man who knows one subject well, cannot, if he would, fail to have acquired much besides: and that man will not be likely to keep fewer pearls who has a string to put them on, than he who picks them up and throws them together without method. This, however, is a very poor metaphor to represent the matter; for what I would aim at producing, not merely holds together what is gained, but has vitality in itself, is always growing. And anybody will confirm this, who, in his own case, has had any branch of study or human affairs to work upon; for he must have observed how all he meets seems to work in with, and assimilate itself to, his own peculiar subject. During his lonely walks, or in society, or in action, it seems as if this one pursuit were something almost independent of himself, always on the watch, and claiming its share in whatever is going on.

Again, by recommending some choice of subject and method in the pursuit of it, I do not wish to be held to a narrow interpretation of that word "subject." For example, I can imagine a man saying, I do not care particularly to investigate this or that question in history; I am not going to pursue any branch of science; but I have a desire to know what the most renowned men have written: I will see what the twenty or thirty great poets have said; what in various ages has appeared the best expression of the things nearest to the heart and fancy of man. A person of more adventure and more time might seek to include the greatest writers in morals or history. There are not so many of them. If a man were to read a hundred great authors, he would, I suspect, have heard what mankind has yet had to say upon most things. I am aware of the culture that would be required for such an enterprise; but I merely give it as an instance of what may justly come under the head of the pursuit of one subject, as I mean it, and which certainly would not be called a narrow purpose.

There is another view of reading which, though it is obvious enough, is seldom taken, I imagine, or at least acted upon; and that is, that in the course of our reading we should lay up in our minds a store of goodly thoughts in well-wrought words,

which should be a living treasure of knowledge always with us, and from which, at various times and amidst all the shifting of circumstances, we might be sure of drawing some comfort, guidance, and sympathy. We see this with regard to the sacred writings. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" But there is a similar comfort on a lower level to be obtained from other sources than sacred ones. In any work that is worth carefully reading, there is generally something that is worth remembering accurately. A man whose mind is enriched with the best sayings of his own country, is a more independent man, walks the streets in a town, or the lanes in the country, with far more delight than he otherwise would have; and is taught by wise observers of man and nature, to examine for himself. Sancho Panza with his proverbs is a great deal better than he would have been without them: and I contend that a man has something in himself to meet troubles and difficulties, small or great, who has stored in his mind some of the best things which have been said about troubles and difficulties. Moreover, the loneliness of sorrow is thereby diminished.

It need not be feared that a man whose memory is rich in such resources, will become a quoting pedant. Often, the sayings which are dearest to our hearts are least frequent on our lips; and those

great ideas which cheer men in their direst struggles are not things which they are likely to inflict by frequent repetition upon those they live with. There is a certain reticence with us as regards anything we deeply love.

I have not hitherto spoken of the indirect advantage of methodical reading in the culture of the mind. One of the dangers supposed to be incident upon a life of study is, that purpose and decisiveness are worn away. Not, as I contend, upon a life of study, such as it ought to be. For pursued methodically there must be some, and not a little, of the decision, resistance and tenacity of pursuit which create, or further, greatness of character in action. Though, as I have said, there are times of keen delight to a man who is engaged in any distinct pursuit, there are also moments of weariness, vexation, and vacillation, which will try the metal in him and see whether he is worthy to understand and master anything. For this you may observe, that in all times and all nations, sacrifice is needed. The savage Indian who was to obtain any insight into the future, had to starve for it for a certain time. Even the fancy of this power was not to be gained without paying for it. And was anything real ever gained without sacrifice of some kind?

There is a very refined use which reading might

be put to; namely, to counteract the particular evils and temptations of our callings, the original imperfections of our characters, the tendencies of our age, or of our own time of life. Those, for instance, who are versed in dull crabbed work all day, of a kind which is always exercising the logical faculty and demanding minute, not to say, vexatious criticisms, would, during their leisure, do wisely to expatiate in writings of a large and imaginative nature. These, however, are often the persons who particularly avoid poetry and works of imagination, whereas they ought, perhaps, to cultivate them most. For it should be one of the frequent objects of every man who cares for the culture of his whole being, to give some exercise to those faculties which are not demanded by his daily occupations and not encouraged by his disposition.

Hitherto, the inducements I have brought forward for more fixedness of pursuit and soundness of method in reading, have been, many of them, comparatively speaking, worldly and slight ones. But there are others, which if well considered, might alone suffice to change at once any habit of thoughtless and purposeless reading. We suppose that we carry our moral nature to another world; why not our intellectual nature; further, why not our acquirements? Is it probable that a

man who has scorned here all advantages for communing with the works of God, is at once to be enlightened as if he had done his duty to the intelligence within him or about him? It may be noticed that, as far as we can discern, the same physical laws govern the most distant parts of creation, as those which prevail here. Moreover, what we call Nature, or Providence, is thrifty as well as liberal — has apparently given to man no more faculty than he fully needs. May not a similar divine frugality — perhaps an essential element for the furtherance of life and the development of energy — pervade creation? These, however, are very serious topics; and I am afraid of being presumptuous in talking about them.

But we must remember that there may be presumption in making too little, as well as in making too much, of knowledge. Added to which, and here I am in much less fear of what I say, I have no doubt that sound intellectual culture is in brotherhood with the best moral culture. Accuracy, for instance, is the prose of truth. And there is a humility which is one of the best things for the mind as well as the soul of man; and may come through either inlet.

At any rate we cannot be wrong, whether we are professed students, or soldiers, or men of the world, or whatever we are, in endeavouring to make the

time we give to books a time not spent unprofitably to ourselves and our fellow-creatures; and this will never be the case, if we are the victims of chance in what we take up to read; if we vacillate for ever in our studies, or if we never look for any thing in them, but the ease of the present moment, or the gratification of getting rid of it insensibly.

— *Friends in Council.*

THOUGHTS

JOSEPH JOUBERT

OUR fathers judged of books with their taste, their conscience, and their reason; we judge of them by the emotions that they cause. "Will this book do good or harm? Is it calculated to improve or to corrupt the mind?" — great questions which our predecessors asked themselves. We ask, "Will it give pleasure?"

There was a time when the world acted upon books. Now books act upon the world.

We don't write our books after they are made, but we make them while writing them. Thence the best that is in them is masked by scaffoldings. They are full of what ought to be put in, and what ought to be left out.

In books, I see everywhere will, but not intel-

lect. Ideas! Who has ideas? There are plenty of approvals and disapprovals; the mind gives its consents or denials; it judges, but it does not see.

Books, thoughts, and style that are sober have on the mind the good effect that a calm countenance has on our eyes and our temper.

An imagination chastened and wise is the only merit that can give a book value.

To make a good book three things are necessary: talent, art, and avocation — that is to say: nature, industry, and practice.

For an ordinary book all that is wanted is a subject, but for a fine work there is wanted a germ which develops itself in the mind like a plant. The only beautiful works are those that have been for a long while, if not worked on, at least thought upon.

Books give us some of our highest pleasures, and men our deepest pains. Sometimes, even thoughts console us for things, and books for men.

Nothing is more beautiful than a beautiful book.

What is exquisite is worth more than what is ample. Dealers have great respect for big books, but readers prefer small ones — they last longer and go farther. Virgil and Horace have but one volume. Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides,

and Terence have not more. Menander, who delights us, is reduced to a few leaves. Without Telemachus, who would know Fenelon? Who would know Bossuet without his *Funeral Orations* and his *Discourse on Universal History*? Pascal, la Bruyere, Vauvenargues, and la Rochefoucault, Boileau, Racine, and la Fontaine occupy but very little space, and are the delight of the refined. Very good writers write little, because they need much time to reduce to beauty their abundance and wealth.

Remember what St. Frances of Sales said, in speaking of the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, — “I have sought repose everywhere, and have only found it in a little corner, with a little book.” Happy is the writer who can make a beautiful little book!

— *Selections from the “Thoughts.” Translated by George H. Calvert.*

BE CAREFUL

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

WHEN we read, another person thinks for us; we merely repeat his mental process. In learning to write, the pupil goes over with his pen what the teacher has outlined in pencil: so in reading; the greater part of the work of thought is already done for us. This is why it relieves us to take up

a book after being occupied with our own thoughts. And in reading, the mind is, in fact, only the playground of another's thoughts. So it comes about that if anyone spends almost the whole day in reading, and by way of relaxation devotes the intervals to some thoughtless pastime, he gradually loses the capacity for thinking; just as the man who always rides, at last forgets how to walk. This is the case with many learned persons: they have read themselves stupid. For to occupy every spare moment in reading, and to do nothing but read, is even more paralyzing to the mind than constant manual labour, which at least allows those engaged in it to follow their own thoughts. A spring never free from the pressure of some foreign body at last loses its elasticity; and so does the mind if other people's thoughts are constantly forced upon it. Just as you can ruin the stomach and impair the whole body by taking too much nourishment, so you can overfill and choke the mind by feeding it too much. The more you read, the fewer are the traces left by what you have read: the mind becomes like a tablet crossed over and over with writing. There is no time for ruminating, and in no other way can you assimilate what you have read. If you read on and on without setting your own thoughts to work, what you have read can not strike root, and is generally lost. It is, in

fact, just the same with mental as with bodily food: hardly the fifth part of what one takes is assimilated. The rest passes off in evaporation, respiration and the like.

The result of all this is that thoughts put on paper are nothing more than footsteps in the sand: you see the way the man has gone, but to know what he saw on his walk, you want his eyes.

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It is in literature as in life: wherever you turn, you stumble at once upon the incorrigible mob of humanity, swarming in all directions, crowding and soiling everything, like flies in summer. Hence the number, which no man can count, of bad books, those rank weeds of literature, which draw nourishment from the corn and choke it. The time, money and attention of the public, which rightfully belong to good books and their noble aims, they take for themselves: they are written for the mere purpose of making money or procuring places. So they are not only useless; they do positive mischief. Nine-tenths of the whole of our present literature has no other aim than to get a few shillings out of the pockets of the public; and to this end author, publisher and reviewer are in league.

Let me mention a crafty and wicked trick, albeit—a profitable and successful one, practised by *littérateurs*, hack writers, and voluminous authors.

In complete disregard of good taste and the true culture of the period, they have succeeded in getting the whole of the world of fashion into leading strings, so that they are all trained to read in time, and all the same thing, viz., *the newest books*; and that for the purpose of getting food for conversation in the circles in which they move. This is the aim served by bad novels produced by writers who were once celebrated, as Spindler, Bulwer Lytton, Eugene Sue. What can be more miserable than the lot of a reading public like this, always bound to peruse the latest works of extremely commonplace persons who write for money only, and who are therefore never few in number? And for this advantage they are content to know by name only the works of the few superior minds of all ages and all countries. Literary newspapers, too, are a singularly cunning device for robbing the reading public of the time which, if culture is to be attained, should be devoted to the genuine productions of literature, instead of being occupied by the daily bungling of commonplace persons.

Hence, in regard to reading, it is a very important thing to be able to refrain. Skill in doing so consists in not taking into one's hands any book merely because at the time it happens to be extensively read; such as political or religious pamphlets, novels, poetry, and the like, which make a

noise, and may even attain to several editions in the first and last year of their existence. Consider, rather, that the man who writes for fools is always sure of a large audience; be careful to limit your time for reading, and devote it exclusively to the works of those great minds of all times and countries, who o'ertop the rest of humanity, those whom the voice of fame points to as such. These alone really educate and instruct. You can never read bad literature too little, nor good literature too much. Bad books are intellectual poison; they destroy the mind. Because people always read what is new instead of the best of all ages, writers remain in the narrow circle of the ideas which happen to prevail in their time; and so the period sinks deeper and deeper into its own mire.

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There are at all times two literatures in progress, running side by side, but little known to each other; the one real, the other only apparent. The former grows into permanent literature; it is pursued by those who live *for* science or poetry; its course is sober and quiet, but extremely slow; and it produces in Europe scarcely a dozen works in a century; these, however, are permanent. The other kind is pursued by persons who live *on* science or poetry; it goes at a gallop, with much noise and

shouting of partisans; and every twelvemonth puts a thousand works on the market. But after a few years one asks, Where are they? where is the glory which came so soon and made so much clamour? This kind may be called fleeting, and the other, permanent literature.

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Still, I wish some one would attempt a *tragical* history of literature, giving the way in which the writers and artists, who form the proudest possession of the various nations which have given them birth, have been treated by them during their lives. Such a history would exhibit the ceaseless warfare, which what was good and genuine in all times and countries has had to wage with what was bad and perverse. It would tell of the martyrdom of almost all those who truly enlightened humanity, of almost all the great masters of every kind of art: it would show us how, with few exceptions, they were tormented to death, without recognition, without sympathy, without followers; how they lived in poverty and misery, whilst fame, honour, and riches, were the lot of the unworthy; how their fate was that of Esau, who while he was hunting and getting venison for his father, was robbed of the blessing by Jacob, disguised in his brother's clothes, how, in spite of all, they were kept up by the love of their work, until at last the

bitter fight of the teacher of humanity is over until the immortal laurel is held out to him, and the hour strikes when it can be said:

Der Schwere Panzer wird zum Flügelkleide
Kurz ist der Schmerz, unendlich ist die Freude.

— *Essays. Translated by T. Bailey Saunders, M.A.*

THE LITTLE SHIPS

"These ! and still these ! bearing the freight so dear — dearer
than pride — dearer than love." — WALT WHITMAN.

VISTAS OF LITERATURE

WALT WHITMAN

REPEATING our inquiry, what, then, do we mean by real literature? especially the democratic literature of the future? Hard questions to meet. The clues are inferential, and turn us to the past. At best, we can only offer suggestions, comparisons, circuits.

It must still be reiterated, as, for the purpose of these memoranda, the deep lesson of history and time, that all else in the contributions of a nation or age, through its politics, materials, heroic personalities, military eclat, etc., remains crude, and defers, in any close and thorough-going estimate, until vitalized by national, original archetypes in literature. They only put the nation in form, finally tell anything — prove, complete anything — perpetuate anything. Without doubt, some of the richest and most powerful and populous communities of the antique world, and some of the grandest personalities and events, have, to after and present times, left themselves entirely unbequeath'd. Doubtless, greater than any that have come down to us, were among those lands, heroisms, persons,

that have not come down to us at all, even by name, date, or location. Others have arrived safely, as from voyages over wide, century-stretching seas. The little ships, the miracles that have buoy'd them, and by incredible chances safely convey'd them, (or the best of them, their meaning and essence,) over long wastes, darkness, lethargy, ignorance, etc., have been a few inscriptions — a few immortal compositions, small in size, yet compassing what measureless values of reminiscence, contemporary portraitures, manners, idioms and beliefs, with deepest inference, hint and thought, to tie and touch forever the old, new body, and the old, new soul! These! and still these! bearing the freight so dear — dearer than pride — dearer than love. All the best experience of humanity, folded, saved, freighted to us here. Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Æschylus, Plato, Juvenal, etc. Precious minims! I think, if we were forced to choose, rather than have you, and the likes of you, and what belongs to, and has grown of you, blotted out and gone, we could better afford, appalling as that would be, to lose all actual ships, this day fasten'd by wharf, or floating on wave, and see them, with all their cargoes, scuttled and sent to the bottom.

Gather'd by geniuses of city, race or age, and

put by them in highest of art's forms, namely, the literary form, the peculiar combinations and outshows of that city, age, or race, its particular modes of the universal attributes and passions, its faiths, heroes, lovers and gods, wars, traditions, struggles, crimes, emotions, joys, (or the subtle spirit of these,) having been passed on to us to illumine our own selfhood, and its experiences — what they supply, indispensable and highest, if taken away, nothing else in the world's boundless storehouses could make up to us, or ever again return.

For us, along the great highways of time, those monuments stand — those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, graving hieroglyphs; Hindus, with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flashes of lightning, conscience like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek; creating eternal shapes of physical and esthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex; — of the figures, some far off and veil'd, others nearer and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, archi-

fects, and musicians; rich Shakespere, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colours, owner thereof, and using them at will; and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again impassive, imperturbable, like the Eyyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favourite figure, and view them as orbs and systems of orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the kosmic intellect, the soul?

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old — while our genius is democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils — not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own — perhaps, (dare we to say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what you yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, must we mete and measure for to-day and here? I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!

By points like these we, in reflection, token what we mean by any land's or people's genuine litera-

ture. And thus compared and tested, judging amid the influence of loftiest products only, what do our current copious fields of print, covering in manifold forms, the United States, better, for an analogy, present, than, as in certain regions of the sea, those spreading, undulating masses of squid through which the whale swimming, with head half out, feeds?

Not but that doubtless our current so-called literature, (like an endless supply of small coin,) performs a certain service, and may-be too, the service needed for the time, (the preparation service, as children learn to spell.) Everybody reads, and truly nearly everybody writes, either books, or for the magazines or journals. The matter has magnitude, too, after a sort. But is it really advancing? or, has it advanced for a long while? There is something impressive about the huge editions of the dailies and weeklies, the mountain-stacks of white paper piled in the press-vaults, and the proud, crashing, ten-cylinder presses, which I can stand and watch any time by the half hour. Then, (though the States in the field of imagination present not a single first class work, not a single great literatus,) the main objects, to amuse, to titillate, to pass away time, to circulate the news, and rumours of news, to rhyme and read rhyme, are yet attain'd, and on a scale of infinity. To-

day in books, in the rivalry of writers, especially novelists, success (so-call'd,) is for him or her who strikes the mean flat average, the sensational appetite for stimulus, incident, persiflage, etc., and depicts, to the common calibre, sensual, exterior life. To such, or the luckiest of them, as we see, the audiences are limitless and profitable; but they cease presently. While this day, or any day, to workmen portraying interior or spiritual life, the audiences were limited, and often laggard — but they last forever.

Compared with the past, our modern science soars, and our journals serve — but ideal and even ordinary romantic literature does not, I think, substantially advance. Behold the prolific brood of the contemporary novel, magazine-tale, theatre-play, etc. The same endless thread of tangled and superlative love-story, inherited, apparently from the Amadis and Palmerins of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries over there in Europe. The costumes and associations brought down to date, the seasoning hotter and more varied, the dragons and ogres left out — but the *thing*, I should say, has not advanced — is just as sensational, just as strain'd — remains about the same, nor more, nor less.

What is the reason our time, our lands, that we see no fresh local courage, sanity, of our own —

the Mississippi, stalwart Western men, real mental and physical facts, Southerners, etc., in the body of our literature? especially the poetic part of it. But always, instead, a parcel of dandies and ennuyees, dapper little gentlemen from abroad, who flood us with their thin sentiment of parlours, parasols, piano-songs, tinkling rhymes, the five-hundredth importation — or whimpering and crying about something, chasing one abortive conceit after another, and forever occupied in dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women. While, current and novel, the grandest events and revolutions, and stormiest passions of history, are crossing to-day with unparallel'd rapidity and magnificence over the stages of our own and all the continents, offering new materials, opening new vistas, with largest needs, inviting the daring launching forth of conceptions in literature, inspired by them, soaring in highest regions, serving art in its highest, (which is only the other name for serving God, and serving humanity,) where is the man of letters, where is the book, with any nobler aim than to follow in the old track, repeat what has been said before — and, as its utmost triumph, sell well, and be erudite or elegant?

— *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers.*

LIFE BLOOD OF A MASTER SPIRIT

JOHN MILTON

I DENY not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors: For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. 'Tis true, no age can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the

want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom, and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself, slays an immortality rather than a life.

— *Areopagitica*.

A VOYAGE TO THE PAST

XAVIER DE MAISTRE

. . . FROM the expedition of the Argonauts to the Assembly of Notables, from the nethermost Hell to the last fixed star of the Milky Way, to the confines of the Universe, to the gates of chaos, this is the vast expanse over the length and breadth of which I wander at leisure, for neither time nor space fail me. I transport myself thither in the wake of Homer, Milton, Virgil, Ossian, etc. All the events that take place between these two epochs; all the countries, all the worlds, all the beings that have existed between these two boundaries, all are mine, all as truly and lawfully belong to me as the

ships that entered the Piræus belonged to a certain Athenian.

Above all the rest do I love the poets who take me back to the remotest antiquity. The death of the ambitious Agamemnon, the ravings of Orestes, and all the tragical history of the Heaven-persecuted family of the Atrides, inspire me with a terror that all the events of modern times fail to excite in me.

Behold the fatal urn which contains the ashes of Orestes! Who would not shudder at the sight? Electra! unhappy sister, calm thyself; it is Orestes himself who brings the urn, and the ashes are those of his enemies.

No banks are to be found now like those of Xanthus or of Scamander — no longer do plains exist such as those of Hesperia or Arcadia. Where are now the isles of Lemnos and Crete? Where is the famous labyrinth? Where is the rock that forlorn Ariadne bathed with her tears? Theseus is no longer visible, Hercules is still less so; men, and even heroes, of our day are but pigmies.

When, again, I would enjoy a scene full of enthusiasm and give vent to all the powers of my imagination, I cling boldly to the flowing robe of the blind and sublime poet of Albion at the moment when he soars heavenward, and dares to approach the throne of the Eternal. What muse was able

to sustain at such an altitude, whither no man before him ever ventured to raise his eyes? From Heaven's dazzling vault which avaricious Mammon gazed on with envious eyes, I pass with horror to the vast caverns of Satan's abode; I take my place at the Infernal Council; I mingle with the host of rebellious spirits, and listen to their discourse. But here I must confess a weakness for which I have often reproached myself.

I cannot help taking a certain interest in this poor Satan (I am speaking of Milton's Satan) since he is precipitated from Heaven. While I blame the obstinacy of the rebel spirit, I own that the firmness he shows in the excess of his misery and the grandeur of his courage, compel me to admire him against my will. Although I do not ignore the woe resulting from the fatal enterprise that led him to force the gate of Hell, and to trouble the home of our first parents, I cannot for a moment—do what I will—wish to see him perish on his way to the confusion of chaos. I even think I could gladly help him, were it not for the shame that holds me back. I follow his every movement, and I find as much pleasure in travelling with him as if I were in good company. In vain I consider that, after all, he is a devil, that he is on his way to ruin the human race, that he is a true democrat not after the manner of

those of Athens, but of Paris — all this does not cure me of my partiality.

How vast was his project! what boldness in its execution!

When the spacious three-fold gates of Hell flew open suddenly before him, and the dark boundless pit of space and darkness yawned in all its horror at his feet — with eager eye he surveyed the sombre realm of chaos, and, without a moment's hesitation, spreading his vast wings, which could have sheltered an army, precipitated himself into the abyss.

I challenge the hardest to a similar deed. To me this is one of the noblest efforts of imagination, and one of the most splendid journeys ever undertaken — next to the journey round my room.

— *A Journey Round My Room.*

ALWAYS IN GOOD HUMOUR

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

. . . OUR estimate of a character always depends much on the manner in which that character affects our own interests and passions. We find it difficult to think well of those by whom we are thwarted or depressed; and we are ready to admit every excuse for the vices of those who are useful or agreeable to us. This is, we believe, one of those illusions

to which the whole human race is subject, and which experience and reflection can only partially remove. It is, in the phraseology of Bacon, one of the *idola tribus*. Hence it is that the moral character of a man eminent in letters or in the fine arts is treated, often by contemporaries, almost always by posterity, with extraordinary tenderness. The world derives pleasure and advantage from the performances of such a man. The number of those who suffer by his personal vices is small, even in his own time, when compared with the number of those to whom his talents are a source of gratification. In a few years all those whom he has injured disappear. But his works remain, and are a source of delight to millions. The genius of Sallust is still with us. But the Numidians whom he plundered, and the unfortunate husbands who caught him in their houses at unseasonable hours, are forgotten. We suffer ourselves to be delighted by the keenness of Clarendon's observation, and by the sober majesty of his style, till we forget the oppressor and the bigot in the historian. Falstaff and Tom Jones have survived the gamekeepers whom Shakespeare cudgelled and the landladies whom Fielding bilked. A great writer is the friend and benefactor of his readers; and they cannot but judge of him under the deluding influence of friendship and gratitude. We all know how unwilling

we are to admit the truth of any disgraceful story about a person whose society we like, and from whom we have received favours; how long we struggle against evidence, how fondly, when the facts cannot be disputed, we cling to the hope that there may be some explanation or some extenuating circumstance with which we are unacquainted. Just such is the feeling which a man of liberal education naturally entertains towards the great minds of former ages. The debt which he owes to them is incalculable. They have guided him to truth. They have filled his mind with noble and graceful images. They have stood by him in all vicissitudes, comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude. These friendships are exposed to no danger from the occurrences by which other attachments are weakened or dissolved. Time glides on; fortune is inconstant; tempers are soured; bonds which seemed indissoluble are daily sundered by interest, by emulation, or by caprice. But no such cause can affect the silent converse which we hold with the highest of human intellects. That placid intercourse is disturbed by no jealousies or resentments. These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry. In the dead there is no change. Plato is never sullen. Cer-

vantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet.

— *Essay on Lord Bacon.*

SOME ANCIENT WORTHIES

"As to the heart, they are sound." — GEORGE DAWSON.

GUIDES ACROSS THE SHORELESS SEA

GEORGE DAWSON

THIS generation is in great danger of reading too much and thinking too little. I condemn the practise of reading a great number of new books. If the records of the library of this or of any other Institution were examined, it would be found that where one man takes off the shelf an old book, a thousand take off a new one. It is to me a subject of regret that so few read old books at all. I like to meet a man who has not read a new book. I glorify old English books, — particularly books that were written before the admirable Georges came, — and will try to show how, by the fact of their being old, and also by virtue of their contents, they are as well worth reading as any new books whatever. When I look down the list of new books with which this nation is flooded every year, I find how oblivion takes care of its own, how death looks after dullness. But the majority of old books have been tested and tried; they are the books that have held on; they were sent out into the world as bantlings, and they have managed to live; they are sound in constitution, wind, and

limb. My own opinion now is that old books are the best. By their freedom from vulgarity, party spirit, and all the affectations of our own time, they are excellent, and have an immense advantage over new ones.

It is difficult to say when a book ceases to be new; some have considered as old books all previous to Goethe, but it is almost impossible to draw the line. Good books, like gentlemen, have no age or time. Shakespeare was a man of all time, one of the immortals of the earth, one of the Catholics of the world, whom no country can claim, of whose biography we know little, and that little is not needed; he was a dateless man, an immortal man, always young and always old, and belonging to every generation.

I shall say nothing of classical books; nothing of that dateless book, the book of books, the Bible; but limit my remarks to old English books. They may be considered either as to the material of the volume, the volumes themselves, or what is in them. I have spent many a half-hour in rail-way carriages and elsewhere, in endeavouring to fathom the mystery of a love of old china, but have failed; it is something *sui generis*, so peculiar, causeless, and endless, one of the quiddities of the human mind, which defeats anything like analysis or apprehension. Something analogous is a certain sort of

bibliomania; regarding books, not as to the matter that is in them, but as to how many are in the market; not as things to be read and studied, but to be possessed and hugged by their fortunate owners, who are powerful in title-pages, and colophons, and dates, to whom the odour and incense of an old library are cheering — its frowsiness delightful, its mustiness charming, and from the fewness of the edition, the yellowness of the paper, and the unsavoury look of the volume, the Aldine, Elzevir, or Baskerville edition, draws forth intense praise. Absurd as this may seem, I can somewhat sympathise with it; it is one of the fringes and skirts of literature, admirable and lovely, but weak. One can hardly read the "Pilgrim's Progress" in an edition with the modern refinements of drawing and niceties of engraving, but must turn to some old tome, with the hero in his old England dress. The "Faerie Queene" looks by no means well upon very white nineteenth century paper; and in Chaucer modernised no man can believe.

Books are now too much considered as mere merchandise, and men forget that of all modes of modern culture, books are the noblest and the best. A love of the antique haunts all but vulgar minds; and in reading old books one can best forget the vanities and follies of to-day, and in their pages we can trace the germs of what we have since be-

come. No man can thoroughly understand to-day, without a reference to, and study of, the past, in which our history is noted and whence our nobleness has come. Books serve as marks of progress; they are guides across the shoreless sea and the great desert path of the past; and in them we may trace the channels through which great and solemn thoughts have rolled. The only way thoroughly to understand history, is to read the books that were written at the time to which it relates.

I open old books, and I find their authors were very close observers of human nature. They lived at home and saw little, but what they did see they looked at very closely. There is no more wisdom in the world now than there was eighteen hundred years ago. The wisest book I know is the Book of Job, which is the oldest book. The wisest men are old men. When I am in a difficulty I go to an old man, to know what I am to do; but when I want to know anything about ozone I go to a young man. About astronomy, old books are ludicrous, but as to the heart, they are sound. Children that are brought up much at home go out into the world more independent, more self-sustaining, than those sent to public schools, — a little angular and odd, but that is a cheap price to pay for stuff, substance, and mettle. Shakespeare once travelled all the way from Stratford-upon-Avon to London, and

we know he came back. That man sounded every depth of the human heart; he stayed at home, and he knew the whole world. Some of those old authors I do envy, because they stopped at home so. Though the range of their knowledge was small, the depth of their knowledge was great. They knew nothing of gorillas, apes, baboons, and Kaffirs; they stopped at home and had few studies; and the consequence was that they studied human nature deeply. Knowledge is scamped now. Some of our modern novelists that are so much talked about do not understand human nature; they draw you a beautiful picture of the externals of human nature, but they do not go so deep. Our fathers had a little garden, but they dug deep and well, — a little range, but they fired true. The fewness of their studies led them to a larger acquaintance with what they did study. Old books are usually wise books, although sometimes eminently unknowing. Because we are carried along at sixty miles an hour, can send our messages with lightning speed, and read our books by gas, we consider ourselves wiser than our fathers, with their slow journeys and their dim lights; and because Hale burned witches prayerfully, and Bacon charmed his warts with moonshine, we hold ourselves wiser than the upright judge and that greatly wise man, perhaps the wisest of the wise.

I like old books because they are old; I like them for their associations, with their antique binding, and their notes in some queer, tall, Italian hand. But of modern books we know too much; we know all about the author, and have the volume wet from the press. It is a sad thing to know too much about authors, whose writings and life do not always accord. The English are great in the anonymous, and it would be well to keep so, for authors do not always gain by being better known. But beautiful is the work of death and time, for down in the grave are put a man's weaknesses and faults, not to rise again, and the remembrance of his best and noblest qualities alone remains. Distance takes away the vulgarity of the hour, and "lends enchantment to the view," as in the pictures of Rembrandt, even beggar boys are idealised and refined, and as the "models" on the Trinita dei Monti steps in Rome, coarse and repulsive as they may seem, become glorious in the pictures, and are ennobled by the painter's art. So is it with old books; they who wrote and who read them have long since dropped into the grave, and the trivial incidents of their lives are forgotten.

Then old books do me good, they calm me so. Whoever has got one or two shelves of old books has one of the most precious anodynes. You cannot get very hot, but old books are an anodyne,

a sleeping draught, herb-tea, a febrifuge. Let me then, prescribe old books to you as a sedative, to which you may resort whenever you have been at a public meeting and have got hot. Old books are of great use to modern men immersed in modern matters, who with wise and reverent study may find in them a kind of literary hermitage in this modern working world.

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Old books fulfill a two-fold task; on the one hand they exalt the past, and they humble the present; for doubtless some man two centuries hence will hold us up as laughable examples of the superstitions of our time. On the other hand, old books keep us full of hope; they prove that humanity is making way; they are like milestones on the road, showing that much has been done, but more remains to do. The course of humanity is onward and upward: it has dropped much, and will drop much more; it has dropped Jupiter and Apollo, Odin and Thor, witchcraft, astrology, and alchemy; it can do more than it has done yet, more to-morrow than yesterday; it has not done all, and old books are a testimony and a proof of what we may yet hope, believe, and work for, since we are not in the dotage of humanity, nor in the old age of the world.

— *Shakespeare and Other Lectures*.

WHERE OLD BOOKS SLEEP

CHARLES LAMB

WHAT a place to be in is an old library! It seems as though all the souls of all the writers that have bequeathed their labours to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding-sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage; and the odour of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those scintial apples which grew amid the happy orchard.

Still less have I curiosity to disturb the elder repose of MSS. Those *variae lectiones* so tempting to the more erudite palates, do but disturb and unsettle my faith. I am no Herculean raker. The credit of the three witnesses might have slept unimpeached for me. I leave these curiosities to Porson, and to G. D. — whom, by the way, I found busy as a moth over some rotten archive, rummaged out of some seldom-explored press, in a nook at Oriel. With long poring he is grown almost into a book. He stood as passive as one by the side of the old shelves. I longed to new-coat him in Russia, and assign him his place.

— *Essays of Elia, Oxford in the Vacation.*

A LIBRARY OF OLD AUTHORS

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

WHAT a sense of security in an old book which Time has criticised for us! What a precious feeling of seclusion in having a double wall of centuries between us and the heats and clamours of contemporary literature! How limpid seems the thought, how pure the old wine of scholarship that has been settling for so many generations in those silent crypts and Falernian *amphoræ* of the Past! No other writers speak to us with the authority of those whose ordinary speech was that of our translation of the Scriptures; to no modern is that frank unconsciousness possible which was natural to a period when yet reviews were not; and no later style breathes that country charm characteristic of days ere the metropolis had drawn all literary activity to itself, and the trampling feet of the multitude had banished the lark and the daisy from the fresh privacies of language. Truly, as compared with the present, these old voices seem to come from the morning fields and not the paved thoroughfares of thought.

There are volumes which have the old age of Plato, rich with gathering experience, meditation, and wisdom, which seem to have sucked colour and ripeness from the genial autumns of all the select

intelligences that have steeped them in the sunshine of their love and appreciation;—these quaint streaks of russet tell of Montaigne; these stripes of crimson fire, of Shakespeare; this sober gold, of Sir Thomas Browne; this purpling bloom, of Lamb; in such fruits we taste the legendary gardens of Alcinoüs and the orchards of Atlas; and there are volumes again which can claim only the inglorious senility of Old Parr or older Jenkins, which have outlived their half-dozen of kings to be the prize of showmen and treasuries of the born-to-be-forgotten trifles of a hundred years ago.

We confess a bibliothecarian avarice that gives all books a value in our eyes; there is for us a recondite wisdom in the phrase, "A book is a book;" from the time when we made the first catalogue of our library, in which "Bible, large, 1 vol.," and "Bible, small, 1 vol.," asserted their alphabetic individuality and were the sole *Bs* in our little hive, we have had a weakness even for those checker-board volumes that only fill up; we cannot breathe the air of that Pepysian self-denial, that Himalayan selectness, which, content with one bookcase would have no tomes in it but *porphyrogeniti*, books of the bluest blood, making room for choicer newcomers by a continuous ostracism to the garret of present incumbents. There is to us a sacredness in a volume, however dull; we live over again

the author's lonely labours and tremulous hopes; we see him, on his first appearance, after parturition, "as well as could be expected," a nervous sympathy yet surviving between the late-severed umbilical cord and the wondrous off-spring, doubtfully entering the Mermaid, or the Devil Tavern, or the Coffee-house of Will or Button, blushing under the eye of Ben or Dryden or Addison, as if they must needs know him for the author of the "Modest Enquiry into the Present State of Dramatique Poetry," or of the "Unities briefly considered by Philomusus," of which they have never heard and never will hear so much as the names; we see the country-gentlemen (sole cause of its surviving to our day) who buy it as a book no gentleman's library can be complete without; we see the spendthrift heir, whose horses and hounds and Pharaonic troops of friends, drowned in a Red Sea of claret, bring it to the hammer, the tall octavo in tree-calf following the ancestral oaks of the park. Such a volume is sacred to us. But it must be the original foundling of the book-stall, the engraved blazon of some extinct baronetcy within its cover, its leaves enshrining memorial-flowers of some passion which the churchyard smothered ere the Stuarts were yet discrowned, suggestive of the trail of laced ruffles, burnt here and there with ashes from the pipe of some dozing

poet, its binding worn and weather-stained, that has felt the inquisitive finger, perhaps, of Malone, or thrilled to the touch of Lamb, doubtful between desire and the odd sixpence. When it comes to a question of reprinting, we are more choice. The new duodecimo is bald and bare, indeed, compared with its battered prototype that could draw us with a single hair of association.

— *My Study Windows.*

BOOKS IN CHAINS

PERCY FITZGERALD

FEW things so effectually transport us back to the older ages as the rare spectacle of a library of *chained* books. In the picturesque old Abbey of Wimbourne there is an antique chamber, small, decayed, low-roofed, high up in the church. Round it are arranged some rows of tall ancient tomes in their mouldering calf and vellum, each secured with its chain hanging down. The effect of all these chains is graceful and bizarre, from the abundant festoonings with which every tome is furnished. There is also the accompanying shelf below; for the book thus secured must be consulted in its own neighbourhood. In one of the libraries at Cambridge, that of Trinity Hall, the old-fashioned system of a seat that drew out for the reader under

the books, with a desk to place it on, is or was retained until lately. The system, too, of turning the books with the backs to the wall and their leaves to the front, on which was written the name of the work, is still to be seen in one or two old libraries. A bar with a ring and padlock ran in front, and gave protection to the long line of volumes.

There have existed, even in our own day, what seemed to be appropriate tenants for these antique retreats. Such would exclaim, like Heinsius, "No sooner have I come into the library than I bolt the door to me, excluding Lust, Ambition, Avarice, and all such vices, whose nurse is Idleness, the mother of Ignorance and Melancholy. In the very lap of Eternity, amongst so many Divine souls, I take my seat with so lofty a spirit and sweet content that I pity all our great ones and rich men that know not this happiness."

Such were these retiring men, whose studies have been as profound and interesting as those of the past. It has been the custom to point to old Burton as a miracle of quotation and display of omnivorous research; but there died not long ago a student whose works offer far more astonishing exhibitions of reading and study. This was the late Kenelm Digby, whose "*Mores Catholici*" and succeeding works astound us, and almost take the breath away by their vast stores of wis-

dom and poetry, quoted from almost every known book. He appears to have read almost everything; and the effect of the whole is not that of "scrappy" mosaic or patchwork. The body of the work is in itself a monument of good sense and thought, and the quotations are only used to illustrate the author's views, and seem to have been furnished from the memory alone, which must have been of prodigious power. The whole is conceived in a quaint antique strain. With these old scholars, limited and cramped in means, often dim-eyed, it is impossible not to have a deep sympathy. They seem to have grown into the very fashion of their idols, were mouldy, "fly-blown," wormed. One such is before me now — a worthy antiquary, and one that might have been treated by Dickens, in his scant, curious library accommodation, the dim, grimed panes of the old episcopal library, the atmosphere in which floated the dust of decayed leaves, the gaunt shadows, the slumbering volumes, the long windows uncleaned for a decade of years, complete stillness, and he, the old, absorbed librarian bent down to his folio! Or I have met him on some country road, walking on to his duty — a strange Dominic Sampson figure — a tiny volume, an Elzivir it might be, held close to his dim bleared eyes.

— *The Book Fancier.*

THE FIRST PRINTER AT WORK

ANONYMOUS

WE enter. The night is mild and beautiful, the moon's silvery beams rest gently on the undulations of the eternally flowing Rhine, a light breeze trembles through the vine leaves, the deep shadows of the houses conceal here and there the streets of old Maïence. But why should we occupy ourselves with such matters? Did the old man with silver hair, with his head bending over the table, and given up body and soul to his work, occupy himself with them? Where were his workmen? They were out of doors enjoying the beauty of the night, being rocked gently in small boats on the river, or drinking in taverns, or standing at church doors saying soft gallantries to their mistresses, and he the solitary, the indefatigable workman, why did he take no rest? His inflamed eye-lids, his forehead furrowed with wrinkles, his rounded back, showed how much he stood in need of it.

A smoky lamp hung from the beam which divided the ceiling of the room into two equal parts, and shed its feeble light on the table where John Gutenberg was working. But beware, reader, of representing this table to yourself as furnished with any of those perfect instruments which are

the improvements of modern days; with a case for the letters, a *visorium*, a composing-stick, a galley, or a catch; it was nothing more than a great oaken board, on which his letters were placed in little woollen bags, ranged in alphabetical order; the form in which they were to be disposed was in front of the artist, and at his side, on a desk, roughly put together, reposed the heavy in-folio which he used as a manuscript. Let the compositor of the present day, who complains, often justly, of the illegible copy of the poet or the philosopher, compare humbly his task with that of his great predecessor! He was obliged first to select from his bags, to place the letters with great delicacy, to turn back to the manuscript in order to read it, and to recommence his labour incessantly until one whole line, laboriously put together, had been ranged along a string; if at this point his negligence, as a compositor, had permitted one fault, he must needs unfasten the string, and recommence his work from the beginning!

Miserable place as it was, there worked the first printer of the world! A humble cradle which contained a giant! Poor, wretched house, what a difference between it and those palaces which the disciples of the great inventor have since built for themselves! The shutters of Gutenberg's room were hermetically closed, not one of the moon's

silver rays could penetrate them; the smell of the printer's ink, of the oil, and the black smoke, made the close air of this poor apartment still more oppressive; a painful stillness prevailed, disturbed only by the metallic noise of the letters as they touched each other. But I will not dwell any longer on this melancholy picture, in which you might have seen the old man, whose stray white locks shaded his broad forehead, whose feeble fingers could only slowly and with trembling, fulfill their task, whose knees tottered, and who whenever he turned over the leaves of his manuscript was forced to wait a few seconds to regain breath and strength.

— *Philobiblon Society Miscellanies, Vol. 5.*

THE GLUTTON OF LITERATURE

ISAAC DISRAELI

ANTHONY MAGLIABECHI, who died at the age of eighty, was celebrated for his great knowledge of books. He has been called the *Helluo*, or the Glutton of Literature. His character is singular; for tho' his life was wholly passed in libraries, being librarian to the Duke of Tuscany, he never *wrote* himself. There is a medal in which he is represented sitting, holding a book in his hand, with a great number of others scattered about him.

The inscription round this medal signifies that it is not sufficient to become learned to have read much, if we read without reflection. This is the only remains we have of his own composition that can be of service to posterity. A simple truth indeed, but one that should be inscribed in the study of every man of letters.

His habits of life were always the same. Ever among his books he troubled himself with no other concern whatever. Although he lost no time in writing himself, it is supposed he gave considerable assistance to several authors who consulted him. He was the editor of various works, and when he died left his vast collection of books for the public use.

M. Heyman, a celebrated Dutch professor, has given the following amusing description of our erudite librarian.

When he was at Florence, he did not fail to pay his respects to this great man, who was considered as its ornament. He found him amongst his books, of which the number was prodigious. Two or three rooms in the first story were crowded with them, not only along their sides but piled in heaps on the floors; so that it was difficult to sit, and more so to walk. A narrow space was contrived indeed, so that walking sideways, you might extricate yourself from one room to another. This

was not all; the passage below stairs was full of books, and the staircase from the top to the bottom was lined with them. When you reached the second story, you saw with astonishment three rooms, similar to those below, equally full; so crowded that two beds in these chambers were also crammed with books.

This apparent confusion did not, however, hinder Magliabechi from immediately finding the books he wanted. He knew them all so well, that even to the least of them it was sufficient to see its outside, to say what it was; and indeed he read them day and night, and never lost sight of any. He eat on his books, he slept on his books, and quitted them as rarely as possible. During his whole life he only went twice from Florence; once to see Fiesoli, which is not above two leagues distant, and once ten miles further by order of the Grand Duke. Nothing could be more simple than his mode of life. A few eggs, a little bread, and some water, were his ordinary food, A drawer in his desk being open, M. Heyman saw there several eggs, and some money, which Magliabechi had placed there for his daily use. But as this drawer was generally open, it frequently happened, that the servants of his friends, or strangers who came to see him, pilfered some of these things; and, I suppose, preferred the money to the eggs.

His dress was as philosophical as his repasts. A black doublet which descended to his knees; large and long breeches; an old patched black cloak; an enormous hat, very much worn, and the edges ragged; a large neckcloth of coarse cloth, begrimed with snuff; a dirty shirt, which he always wore as long as it lasted, and which the broken elbows of his doublet did not conceal; and, to finish this inventory, a pair of ruffles which did not belong to the shirt. Such was the brilliant dress of our learned Florentine; and in such did he appear in the public streets, as well as in his own house. Let me not forget another circumstance: to warm his hands he generally had a stove with fire fastened to his arms, so that his clothes were generally singed and burnt, and his hands scorched. Excepting all this, he had nothing otherwise remarkable about him. He was the best man in the world (says Mr. Heyman), and was extremely polite and affable to strangers.

He possessed a singular memory, of which I have given an anecdote in my preceding volume. It is somewhat uncommon that as he was so fond of literary *food*, he did not occasionally dress some dishes of his own invention. He indeed should have written *Curiosities of Literature*. He was a living Cyclopedia, though a dark lanthorn.

— *Curiosities of Literature*.

THE GLORIOUS COURT

" That place, that does
Contain my books, the best
Companions, is
To me a glorious court. "

JOHN FLETCHER.

BLESSINGS BE

THOMAS CARLYLE

MAY blessings be upon the head of Cadmus or the Phoenicians, or whoever invented books! I may not detain you with the praises of an art that carries the voice of man to the extremities of the earth, and to the latest generations, but it is lawful for the solitary wight to express the love he feels for those companions so steadfast and unpresuming — that go or come without reluctance, and that, when his fellow animals are proud or stupid or peevish, are ever ready to cheer the langour of his soul, and gild the barrenness of life with the treasures of bygone times.

— *Early Letters; To Mr. R. Mitchell.*

IDEALIZE YOUR MASTERS

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY

AND Thou, O Youth, for whom these lines are written, fear not; idealize your friend, for it is better to love and be deceived than not to love at all; idealize your masters, and take Shelley and Sidney to your bosom, so shall they serve you more

nobly and you love them more sweetly than if the touch and sight of their mortality had been yours indeed; idealize your country, remembering that Brutus in the dagger-stroke and Cato in his death-darkness knew not the greater Rome, the proclaimer of the unity of our race, the codifier of justice, the establisher of our church, and died not knowing, — but do you believe in the purpose of God, so shall you best serve the times to be; and in your own life, fear not to act as your ideal shall command, in the constant presence of that self who goes with you, as I have said, so shall you blend with him at the end. Fear not either to believe that the soul is as eternal as the order that obtains in it, wherefore you shall forever pursue that divine beauty which has here so touched and inflamed you, for this is the faith of man, your race, and those who were fairest in its records. And have recourse always to the fountains of this life in literature, which are the wells of truth. How to live is the one matter; the wisest man in his ripe age is yet to seek in it; but Thou, begin now and seek wisdom in the beauty of virtue and live in its light, rejoicing in it; so in this world shall you live in foregleam of the world to come.

— *Heart of Man.*

THE MASTER'S LIBRARY

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

I ADJOURNED from the table in company with the old Master to his apartments. He was evidently in easy circumstances, for he had the best accommodations the house afforded. We passed through a reception-room to his library, where everything showed that he had ample means for indulging the modest tastes of a scholar.

The first thing, naturally, when one enters a scholar's study or library, is to look at his books. One gets a notion very speedily of his tastes and the range of his pursuits by a glance around his book-shelves.

Of course, you know there are many fine houses where the library is part of the upholstery, so to speak. Books in handsome binding kept locked under plate-glass in showy dwarf bookcases are as important to stylish establishments as servants in livery, who sit with folded arms, are to stylish equipages. I suppose those wonderful statues with folded arms do sometimes change their attitude, and I suppose those books with the gilded backs do sometimes get opened, but it is nobody's business whether they do or not, and it is not best to ask too many questions.

This sort of thing is common enough, but there

is another case that may prove deceptive if you undertake to judge from appearances. Once in a while you will come on a house where you will find a family of readers and almost no library. Some of the most indefatigable devourers of literature have very few books. They belong to book clubs, they haunt the public libraries, they borrow of friends, and somehow or other get hold of everything they want, scoop out all it holds for them, and have done with it. When *I* want a book, it is as a tiger wants a sheep. I must have it with one spring, and, if I miss it, go away defeated and hungry. And my experience with public libraries is that the first volume of the book I inquire for is out, unless I happen to want the second, when *that* is out.

I was pretty well prepared to understand the Master's library and his account of it. We seated ourselves in two very comfortable chairs, and I began the conversation.

I see you have a large and rather miscellaneous collection of books. Did you get them together by accident or according to some preconceived plan?

Both, sir, both, — the Master answered. — When Providence throws a good book in my way, I bow to its decree and purchase it as an act of piety, if it is reasonably or unreasonably cheap. I *adopt* a certain number of books every year, out

of a love for the foundlings and stray children of other people's brains that nobody seems to care for. Look here.

He took down a Greek Lexicon finely bound in calf, and spread it open.

Do you see that Hedericus? I had Greek dictionaries enough and to spare, but I saw that noble quarto lying in the midst of an ignoble crowd of cheap books, and marked with a price which I felt to be an insult to scholarship, to the memory of Homer, sir, and the awful shade of Æschylus. I paid the mean price asked for it, and I wanted to double it, but I suppose it would have been a foolish sacrifice of coin to sentiment. I love that book for its looks and behaviour. None of your "half-calf" economies in that volume, sir! And see how it lies open anywhere! There isn't a book in my library that has such a generous way of laying its treasures before you. From Alpha to Omega, calm, assured, rest at any page that your choice or accident may light on. No lifting of a rebellious leaf like an upstart servant that does not know his place and can never be taught manners, but tranquil, well-bred repose. A book may be a perfect gentleman in its aspect and demeanour, and this book would be good company for personages like Roger Ascham and his pupils the Lady Elizabeth and the Lady Jane Grey.

The Master was evidently riding a hobby, and what I wanted to know was the plan on which he had formed his library. So I brought him back to the point by asking him the question in so many words.

Yes, he said, I have a kind of notion of the way in which a library ought to be put together — no, I don't mean that, I mean ought to grow. I don't pretend to say that mine is a model, but it serves my term well enough, and it represents me pretty accurately. A scholar must shape his own shell, *secrete* it one might almost say, for secretion is only separation, you know, of certain elements derived from the materials of the world about us. And a scholar's study, with the books lining its walls, is his shell. It isn't a mollusk's shell, either; it's a caddice-worm's shell. You know about the caddice-worm?

More or less; less rather than more, — was my humble reply.

Well, sir, the caddice-worm is the larva of a fly, and he makes a case for himself out of all sorts of bits of everything that happen to suit his particular fancy, dead or alive, sticks and stone and small shells with their owners in 'em, living as comfortable as ever. Every one of these caddice-worms has his special fancy as to what he will pick up and glue together, with a kind of natural cement he

provides himself, to make his case out of. In it he lives, sticking his head and shoulders out once in a while, that is all. Don't you see that a student in his library is a caddice-worm in his case? I've told you that I take an interest in pretty much everything, and don't mean to fence out any human interests from the private grounds of my intelligence. Then, again, there is a subject, perhaps I may say there is more than one, that I want to exhaust, to know to the very bottom. And besides, of course I must have my literary *harem*, my *parc aux cerfs*, where my favourites await my moments of leisure and pleasure, — my scarce and precious editions, my luxurious typographical masterpieces; my Delilahs, that take my head in their lap: the pleasant story-tellers and the like; the books I love because they are fair to look upon, prized by collectors, endeared by old associations, secret treasures that nobody else knows anything about; books, in short, that I like for insufficient reasons it may be, but peremptorily, and mean to like and to love and to cherish till death us do part.

Don't you see I have given you the key to the way my library is made up, so that you can *apriorize* the plan according to which I have filled my book-cases? I will tell you how it is carried out.

In the first place, you see, I have four extensive

cyclopædias. Out of these I can get information enough to serve my immediate purpose on almost any subject. These, of course, are supplemented by geographical, biographical, bibliographical, and other dictionaries, including of course lexicons to all the languages I ever meddled with. Next to these come the works relating to my one or two specialties, and these collections I make as perfect as I can. Every library should try to be complete on something, if it were only on the history of pin-heads. I don't mean that I buy all the trashy compilations on my special subjects, but I try to have all the works of any real importance relating to them, old as well as new. In the following compartment you will find the great authors in all the languages I have mastered, from Homer and Hesiod downward to the last great English name. This division, you see, you can make almost as extensive or as limited as you choose. You can crowd the great representative writers into a small compass; or you can make a library consisting only of the different editions of Horace, if you have space and money enough. Then comes the *Harem*, the shelf or the book-case of Delilahs, that you have paid wicked prices for, that you love without pretending to be reasonable about it, and would bag in case of fire before all the rest, just as Mr. Townley took the Clytie to his carriage

when the anti-Catholic mob threatened his house in 1780. As for the foundlings like my Hedericus, they go among their peers; it is a pleasure to take them from the dusty stall where they were elbowed by plebian school-books and battered odd volumes, and give them Alduses and Elzivirs for companions. — *The Poet at the Breakfast Table.*

SCALIGER, GERBELIUS, ORONTIUS ET AL

ROBERT BURTON

Julius Scaliger was so much affected with Poetry, that he brake out into a pathetic protestation, he had rather be the Author of 12 verses in *Lucan*, or such an ode in *Horace*, than Emperor of *Germany*. *Nicholas Gerbelius*, that good old man, was so much ravished with a few Greek Authors restored to light, with hope and desire of enjoying the rest, that he exclaims forthwith, *Arabibus atque Indis omnibus erimus ditiores*, we shall be richer than all the *Arabick* or *Indian* Princes; of such esteem they were with him, incomparable worth and value. *Seneca* prefers *Zeno* and *Chrysippus*, two doting *Stoicks*, (he was so much enamoured on their works), before any Prince or General of an Army; and *Orontius* the Mathematician so far admires *Archimedes*, that he calls him *divinum & homine majorem*, a petty God, more than a man;

and well he might, for ought I see, if you respect fame or worth. *Pindar* of *Thebes* is as much renowned for his Poems, as *Epaminondas*, *Pelopidas*, *Hercules*, or *Bacchus*, his fellow citizens, for their warlike actions; *et si famam respicias, non pauciores Aristotelis quam Alexandri meminerunt*, (as *Cardan* notes), *Aristotle* is more known than *Alexander*; for we have a bare relation of *Alexander's* deeds, but *Aristotle* *totus vivit in monumentis*, is whole in his works: yet I stand not upon this; the delight is it which I aim at; so great pleasure, such sweet content, there is in study. *King James*, 1605, when he came to our University of *Oxford*, and, amongst other edifices, now went to view that famous Library, renewed by *Sr. Thomas Bodley*, in imitation of *Alexander*, at his departure brake out into that noble speech, If I were not a King, I would be an University man; and if it were so that I must be a prisoner, if I might have my wish, I would desire to have no other prison than that Library, and to be chained together with so many good Authors et mortuis magistris. So sweet is the delight of study, the more learning they have, (as he that hath a Dropsy, the more he drinks the thirstier he is), the more they covet to learn, and the last day is (the pupil of the former;) *prioris discipulus*; harsh at first learning is, *radices amaræ*, but *fructus dulces*, according to that of *Isocrates*,

pleasant at last; the longer they live, the more they are enamoured of the Muses.

Heinsius, the keeper of the Library at *Leyden* in *Holland*, was mewed up in it all the year long; and that which to my thinking should have bred a loathing caused in him a greater liking. *I no sooner (saith he) come into the Library, but I bolt the door to me, excluding lust, ambition, avarice, and all such vices, whose nurse is idleness, the mother of ignorance, and Melancholy herself, and in the very lap of eternity, amongst so many divine souls, I take my seat, with so lofty a spirit and sweet content, that I pity all our great ones, and rich men that know not this happiness.* I am not ignorant in the meantime (notwithstanding this which I have said) how barbarously and basely for the most part our ruder Gentry esteem of Libraries and Books, how they neglect & contemn so great a treasure, so inestimable a benefit, as *Æsop's* Cock did the Jewel he found in the dunghill, and all through error, ignorance, and want of education.

— *The Anatomy of Melancholy.*

THE MIRACLE OF MY POSSESSIONS

NEIL ARNOTT

AND in a corner of my house, I have Books!
The miracle of all my possessions, more wonder-

ful than the wishing-cap of the Arabian tales; for they transport me instantly, not only to all places, but to all times. By my books, I can conjure up before me, to vivid existence, all the great and good men of antiquity; and for my individual satisfaction, I can make them act over again the most renowned of their exploits: the orators declaim for me: the historians recite: the poets sing: and from the equator to the pole, or from the beginning of time until now, by my books, I can be where I please. — *Elements of Physics.*

AN ANTECHAMBER OF GREAT SPIRITS

GEORGE GILFILLAN

THE speaking silence of a number of books, where, though it were the wide Bodleian or Vatican, not one whisper could be heard, and yet, where, as in an antechamber, so many great spirits are waiting to deliver their messages — their churchyard stillness continuing even when their readers are moving to their pages, in joy or agony, as to the sound of martial instruments — their awaking, as from deep slumber, to speak with miraculous organ, like the shell which has only to be lifted, and “pleased it remembers its august abodes, and murmurs as the ocean murmurs there” — their power of drawing tears, kindling blushes, awaken-

ing laughter, calming or quickening the motions of the life's blood, lulling to repose, or rousing to restlessness, often giving life to the soul, and sometimes giving death to the body—the meaning which radiates from their quiet countenances—the tale of shame or glory which their title pages tell—the memories suggested by the character of their authors, and of the readers who have throughout successive centuries perused them—the thrilling thoughts excited by the sight of names and notes inscribed on their margins or blank pages by hands long since mouldered in the dust, or by those dear to us as our life's blood, who had been snatched from our sides—the aspects of gaiety or of gloom connected with the bindings and the age of volumes—the effects of sunshine playing as if on a congregation of happy faces, making the duskiest shine, and the gloomiest be glad—or of shadow suffusing a sombre air over all—the joy of the proprietor of a large library who feels that Nebuchadnezzar watching great Babylon, or Napoleon reviewing his legions, will not stand comparison with himself seated amid the broad maps, and rich prints, and numerous volumes which his wealth has enabled him to collect and his wisdom entitled him to enjoy.

— *Second Gallery of Literary Portraits.*

LET NO BOOK PERISH

HARTLEY COLERIDGE

BOOKS, no less than their authors, are liable to get ragged, and to experience that neglect and contempt which generally follows the outward and visible signs of poverty. We do therefore most heartily commend the man, who bestows on a tattered and shivering volume, such decent and comely apparel, as may protect it from the insults of the vulgar, and the more cutting slights of the fair. But if it be a rare book, "the lone survivor of a numerous race," the one of its family that has escaped the trunk-makers and pastry-cooks, we would counsel a little extravagance in arraying it. Let no book perish, unless it be such an one as it is your duty to throw into the fire. There is no such thing as a worthless book, though there are some far worse than worthless; no book which is not worth preserving, if its existence may be tolerated; as there are some men whom it may be proper to hang, but none who should be suffered to starve. To *reprint* books that do not rise to a certain pitch of worth, is foolish. It benefits nobody so much as it injures the possessors of the original copies. It is like a new coinage of Queen Anne's farthings. That anything is in being, is

a presumptive reason that it should remain in being, but not that it should be multiplied.

— *Lives of Northern Worthies.*

THE VESTURE OF A THOUGHT

THOMAS CARLYLE

THE Hero as a *Man of Letters*, again, of which class we are to speak to-day, is altogether a product of these new ages; and so long as the wondrous art of *Writing*, or of Ready-writing which we call *Printing*, subsists, he may be expected to continue, as one of the main forms of Heroism for all future ages. He is, in various respects, a very singular phenomenon.

He is new, I say; he has hardly lasted above a century in the world yet. Never, till about a hundred years ago, was there seen any figure of a Great Soul living apart in that anomalous manner; endeavouring to speak forth the inspiration that was in him by Printed Books, and find place and subsistence by what the world would be pleased to give him for doing that. Much has been sold and bought, and left to make its own bargain in the marketplace; but the inspired wisdom of a Heroic Soul never till then, in that naked manner. He, with his copy-rights and copy-wrongs, in his squalid garret, in his rusty coat; ruling (for this

is what he does), from his grave, after death, whole nations and generations who would, or would not, give him bread while living, — is a rather curious spectacle! Few shapes of Heroism can be more unexpected.

The Hero is he who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine, and Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial: his being is in that; he declares that abroad, by act or speech as it may be, in declaring himself abroad. His life, as we said before, is a piece of the everlasting heart of Nature herself; all men's life is, — but the weak many know not the fact, and are untrue to it, in most times; the strong few are strong, heroic, perennial, because it cannot be hidden from them.

Certainly the Art of Writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised. Odin's *Runes* were the first form of the work of a Hero; *Books*, written words, are still miraculous *Runes*, the latest form! In *Books* lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream. Mighty fleets and armies, harbours and arsenals, vast cities, high-domed, many-engined, — they are precious, great: but what do they become? Agamemnon, the many Agamemnons, Pericleses, and their

Greece; all is gone now to some ruined fragment, dumb mournful wrecks and blocks: but the Books of Greece! There Greece, to every thinker, still very literally lives; can be called up again to life. No magic *Rune* is stranger than a Book. All that Mankind has done, thought, gained or been: it is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of Books. They are the chosen possession of men.

Do not Books still accomplish *miracles*, as *Runes* were fabled to do? They persuade men. Not the wretchedest circulating-library novel, which foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages, but will help to regulate the actual practical weddings and households of those foolish girls. So 'Celia' felt, so 'Clifford' acted: the foolish Theorem of Life, stamped into these young brains, comes out as a solid Practise one day. Consider whether any *Rune* in the wildest imagination of Mythologist ever did such wonders as, on the actual firm Earth, some Books have done! What built St. Paul's Cathedral? Look at the heart of the matter, it was that divine Hebrew Book, — the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wilderness of Sinai! It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer. With the art of Writing, of which Printing is a simple, an inevitable and comparatively insignificant corollary, the true reign of miracles

for mankind commenced. It related, with a wondrous new contiguity and perpetual closeness, the Past and Distant with the Present in time and place; all times and all places with this our actual Here and Now. All things were altered for men; all modes of important work of men: teaching, preaching, governing, and all else.

To look at Teaching, for instance. Universities are a notable, respectable product of the modern ages. Their existence, too, is modified, to the very basis of it, by the existence of Books. Universities arose while there were yet no Books procurable; while a man, for a single Book, had to give an estate of land. That, in those circumstances, when a man had some knowledge to communicate, he should do it by gathering the learners round him, face to face, was a necessity for him. If you wanted to know what Abelard knew, you must go and listen to Abelard. Thousands, as many as thirty thousand, went to hear Abelard and that metaphysical theology of his. And now for any other teacher who had also something of his own to teach, there was a great convenience opened: so many thousands eager to learn were already assembled yonder; of all places the best place for him was that. For any third teacher it was better still; and grew ever the better, the more teachers there came. It only needed now that the King

took notice of this new phenomenon; combined or agglomerated the various schools into one school; gave it edifices, privileges, encouragements, and named it *Universitas*, or School of all Sciences: the University of Paris, in its essential characters, was there. The model of all subsequent Universities; which down even to these days, for six centuries now, have gone on to found themselves. Such, I conceive, was the origin of Universities.

It is clear, however, with this simple circumstance, facility of getting Books, the whole conditions of the business from top to bottom were changed. Once invent Printing, you metamorphosed all Universities, or superseded them! The Teacher needed not now to gather men personally around him, that he might *speak* to them what he knew: print it in a Book, and all learners far and wide, for a trifle, had it each at his own fireside, much more effectually to learn it! — Doubtless there is still peculiar virtue in Speech; even writers of Books may still, in some circumstances, find it convenient to speak also, — witness our present meeting here! There is, one would say, and must ever remain while man has a tongue, a distinct province for Speech as well as for Writing and Printing. In regard to all things this must remain; to Universities among others. But the limits of the two have nowhere yet been pointed out, ascer-

tained; much less put in practice: the University which would completely take in that great new fact, of the existence of Printed Books, and stand on a clear footing for the Nineteenth Century as the Paris one did for the Thirteenth, has not yet come into existence. If we think of it, all that a University or final highest School can do for us, is still but what the first School began doing, — teach us to *read*. We learn to *read*, in various languages, in various sciences; we learn the alphabet and letters of all manner of Books. But the place where we are to get knowledge, even theoretic knowledge, is the Books themselves! It depends on what we read, after all manner of Professors have done their best for us. The true University of these days is a Collection of Books.

But to the Church itself, as I hinted already, all is changed, in its preaching, in its working, by the introduction of Books. The Church is the working recognised Union of our Priests or Prophets, of those who by wise teaching guide the souls of men. While there was no Writing, even while there was no Easy-writing, or *Printing*, the preaching of the voice was the natural sole method of performing this. But now with Books! — He that can write a true Book, to persuade England, is not he the Bishop and Archbishop, the Primate of England and of all England? I many a time

say, the writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books, these *are* the real working effective Church of a modern country. Nay, not only our preaching, but even our worship, is not it too accomplished by means of Printed Books? The noble sentiment which a gifted soul has clothed for us in melodious words, which brings melody into our hearts, — is not this essentially, if we will understand it, of the nature of worship? There are many, in all countries, who, in this confused time, have no other method of worship. He who, in any way, shews us better than we knew before that a lilly of the fields is beautiful, does he not shew it us as an Effluence of the Fountain of all Beauty; as the *handwriting*, made visible there, of the great Maker of the Universe? He has sung for us, made us sing with him, a little verse of a sacred Psalm. Essentially so. How much more he who sings, who says, or in any way brings home to our heart the noble doings, feelings, darings, and endurances of a brother man! He has verily touched our hearts as with a live coal *from the altar*. Perhaps there is no worship more authentic. Literature so far as it is Literature, is an 'apocalypse' of Nature, a revealing of the 'open secret.' It may well enough be named, in Fichte's style, a 'continuous revelation' of the Godlike in the Terrestrial and Common. The Godlike does

ever, in very truth, endure there; is brought out, now in this dialect, now in that, with various degrees of clearness: all true gifted Singers and Speakers are, consciously or unconsciously doing so. The dark stormful indignation of a Byron, so wayward and perverse, may have touches of it; nay, the withered mockery of a French sceptic, — his mockery of the False, a love and worship of the True. How much more the sphere-harmony of a Shakespeare, of a Goethe; the cathedral music of a Milton! They are something, too, those humble genuine lark-notes of a Burns, — skylark, starting from the humble furrow, far overhead into the blue depths, and singing to us so genuinely there! For all true singing is of the nature of worship; as indeed all true *working* may be said to be, — whereof such *singing* is but the record and fit melodious representation, to us. Fragments of a real 'Church Liturgy' and 'Body of Homilies,' strangely disguised from the common eye, are to be found weltering in that huge froth-ocean of Printed Speech we loosely call Literature! Books are our Church too.

Or turning now to the Government of men. Witenagemote, old Parliament, was a great thing. The affairs of nations were there deliberated and decided; what we were to *do* as a nation. But does not though the name Parliament subsists, the

parliamentary debate go on now, everywhere and at all times, in a far more comprehensive way, *out* of Parliament altogether? Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a *Fourth Estate* more important far than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact, — very momentous to us in these times. Literature is our Parliament too. Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to Democracy: invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable. Writing brings Printing; brings universal every-day extempore Printing, as we see it at present. Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garnitures: the requisite thing is, that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite. The nation is governed by all that has tongue in the nation: Democracy is virtually *there*. Add only that whatsoever power exists will have itself, by and by, organised; working secretly under bandages, obscurations, obstructions, it will never rest till it gets to work free, unencumbered, visible to all. Democracy virtually extant will insist on becoming palpably extant. —

On all sides, are we not driven to the conclusion that, of the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful and worthy are the things we call Books! Those poor bits of rag-paper with black ink on them; — from the Daily Newspaper to the sacred Hebrew Book, what have they not done, what are they not doing! — For indeed, whatever be the outward form of the thing (bits of paper, as we say, and black ink), is it not verily, at bottom the highest act of man's faculty that produces a Book? It is the *Thought* of man; the true thaumaturgic virtue; by which man works all things whatsoever. All that he does, and brings to pass, is the vesture of a Thought. This London City, with all its houses, palaces, steam-engines, cathedrals, and huge immeasurable traffic and tumult, what is it but a Thought, but millions of Thoughts made into One; — a huge immeasurable Spirit of Thought, embodied in brick, in iron, smoke, dust, Palaces, Parliaments, Hackney Coaches, Katherine Docks, and the rest of it! Not a brick was made but some man had to *think* of the making of that brick. The thing we called 'bits of paper with traces of black ink,' is the *purest* embodiment a Thought of man can have. No wonder it is, in all ways, the activist and noblest.

— *Heroes and Hero Worship.*

FEW AND CHOICE

A. BRONSON ALCOTT

ONE cannot celebrate books sufficiently. After saying his best, still something better remains to be spoken in their praise. As with friends, one finds new beauties at every interview, and would stay long in the presence of those choice companions. As with friends, he may dispense with a wide acquaintance. Few and choice. The richest minds need not large libraries. That is a good book which is opened with expectation and closed with profit.

Lord Shaftesbury, writing of the literature of his time, thus happily portrays the qualities of a good book. "No work of wit," he says, "can be esteemed perfect without that strength and boldness of hand which give it body and proportion. A good piece, the painters say, must have good muscling, as well as colouring and drapery. And surely no writing or discourse of any great moment can seem other than enervated, when neither strong reason, nor antiquity, nor the record of things, nor the natural history of man, nor anything which can be called knowledge, dares accompany it except in some ridiculous habit which may give it an air of play and dalliance."

Of books in our time the variety is so voluminous,

and they follow so fast from the press, that one must be a swift reader to acquaint himself even with their titles, and wise to discern what are worth the reading. It is a wise book that is good from title-page to the end.

"Were I to be judge and no other to be gratified," says Howell, "I think I should silence whole libraries of authors and reduce the world of books into a parcel; whereas, were another to sit censor, it may be all those I had spared would be Condemned to darkness and obtain no exemption from those ruins; and were all to be suppressed which some think unworthy of the light no more would be left than there were before Moses and Trismegistus."

I confess to being drawn rather to the antiques, and turn with a livelier expectancy the dingy leaves, finding often inside the worn covers more for my reading than on the snowy pages of those most opened by frequenters at the book-stores. I fancy that I am guided by a selecting instinct to lay my hand upon the very volume that had long been seeking my acquaintance. There are patterns of bindings, moreover, that ensure wise contents, wisdom being not less an ancient than contemporary, and retains the physiognomy of its times. One may remember that time gathers and preserves the best along with the worthless, and the selection

is thus the wider. And time must determine those of modern date which may attain immortality. The fewest of any period will hardly be remembered beyond their authors' life-time; and how large the number that never gain general perusal.

An author who sets his reader on sounding the depths of his own thoughts serves him best, and at the same time teaches the modesty of authorship.

The more life embodied in the book, the more companionable. Like a friend, the volume salutes one pleasantly at every opening of its leaves, and entertains; we close it with charmed memories, and come again and again to the entertainment. The books that charmed us in youth recall the delight ever afterwards; we are hardly persuaded that there are any like them, any deserving equally our affections. Fortunate if the best fall in our way at this susceptible and forming period of our lives.

I value books for their suggestiveness even more than for the information they may contain, works that may be taken in hand and laid aside, read at moments, containing sentences that quicken my thoughts and prompt to following these into their relations with life and things. I am stimulated and exalted by the perusal of books of this kind, and should esteem myself fortunate if I might add another to the few which the world shall take to its affections. — *Table Talk*.

AVOID THE GAPING CROWD

ERASMUS

YOU want to know what I am doing. I devote myself to my Books. With these pleasing friends I enjoy the most delightful intercourse. With them I shut myself in some corner, where I avoid the gaping crowd, and either speak to them in sweet whispers, or listen to their gentle voices, talking with them as with myself. Can anything be more convenient than this? They never hide their own secrets, while they keep sacred whatever is intrusted to them. They speak when bidden, and when not bidden they hold their tongue. They talk of what you wish, as much as you wish, and as long as you wish. They do not flatter, feign nothing, keep back nothing, freely tell you of your faults, and take no man's character away. What they say is either amusing or wholesome. In prosperity they moderate, in affliction they console, do not vary with fortune, follow you in all dangers, and last out to the very grave. Nothing can be more candid than their relations with one another. I visit them from time to time, now choosing one companion, and now another with perfect impartiality. With these humble friends I bury myself in seclusion. What wealth or what sceptres would I take in exchange for this tranquil life? — *Epistle to a Friend.*

THE LIBRARY OF AN OLD SCHOLAR

CHARLES WHIBLEY

THERE is a personal intimacy in a library which does not belong to any other possession of man. To look upon the books of a scholar or poet is to see the place in which he sharpened, if he did not forge his thought. When he has scored the margin with comment or reflection, he has imparted something of himself to the printed page; but even when the page is virgin-white, you cannot forget the sentiment of him whose hand has touched it. The copy of Florio's *Montaigne*, with Shakespeare's name scrawled on the first sheet, will always affect the beholder more poignantly than a copy to which no legend is attached. But if the mere accident of possession sanctifies a book, the use and comment of a great man might make it priceless. What would we not give for Shakespeare's *Plutarch*, annotated or scored by his own careful hand? It might reveal his habit of work more clearly than a month of argument; it might show us how he turned the noble prose of North into impassioned verse. And what is true of a single book is ten times true of a collection. A man's temper is touched at many points of interest, and by his choice and preference you may know him. The library of Samuel Pepys, for instance, is the best index

of his many-sided mind. The careful arrangement of the books, nicely adjusted according to their height, is as familiar as the methodical taste which dictated their selection. There they remain for all time, as Pepys intended they should remain, in the cases which he designed for their reception. If physical immortality were possible, surely it could best be attained by this artifice of Samuel Pepys. For as you stand in the room, which he himself might recognise, and gaze upon the books ordered by his will, you may easily believe that he still haunts the place. It is not a museum filled with the indiscriminate spoils of a lifetime; it is a living library, such as he, the pious donor, might have inhabited. But not only are the treasures disposed according to the fancy of him who gathered them; they are such treasures as best illustrate his curiosity. In one press lies his music, written much of it by his hand; and there you may still find the manuscript of the famous song 'Gaze not on Swans,' or of the yet more famous 'Beauty Retire,' which Knipp herself was wont to sing. Or you may turn over the collection of ballads and broadsides which he made for his amusement, and which to-day is priceless to the student of popular literature. Or you may recall his zeal for the Navy, which he served so faithfully, by contemplating the documents wherein is set forth the

prowess of our fleet. But wherever you look, you see the hand of Samuel Pepys, and you would not be disconcerted if he descended suddenly from Kneller's canvas and pointed out to you his own cherished possessions. — *Literary Portraits.*

THE BIRTH OF THE BODLEIAN

THOMAS BODLEY

THE following letter was addressed by Thomas Bodley to the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford on February 23, 1597:

"Sir,

"Altho' you know me not as I suppose, yet for the farthering of an offer of evident utilitie to your whole University I will not be too scrupulous in craving your assistance. I have been alwaies of a mind that if God of his goodness should make me able to do anything for the benefit of posteritie, I would shew some token of affliction that I have evermore borne to the studies of good learning. I know my portion is too slender to perform for the present any answerable act to my willing disposition, but yet to notify some part of my desire in that behalf I have resolved thus to deal. Where there hath been heretofore a public library in Oxford which you know is apparent by the room itself remaining and by your statute records, I will take the charge and cost upon me to reduce it again to

its former use and to make it fit and handsome with seats and shelves and desks and all that may be needful to stir up other mens benevolence to help to furnish it with books. And this I purpose to begin as soon as timber can be gotten to the intent that you may be of some speedy profit of my project. And where before as I conceive it was to be reputed but a store of book of divers benefactors because it never had any lasting allowance for augmentation of the number or supply of books decayed, whereby it came to pass that when those that were in being were either wasted or embezzled, the whole foundation came to ruin. To meet with that inconvenience, I will so provide hereafter (if God do not hinder my present design) as you shall be still assured of a standing annual rent to be disbursed every year in buying of books, or officers stipends and other pertinent occasions, with which provision and some order for the preservation of the place and the furniture of it from accustomed abuses, it may perhaps in time to come prove a notable treasure for the multitude of volumes, an excellent benefit for the use and ease of students, and a singular ornament of the University."

THE MIRROUR OF AUNCIENT STORIES

GEOFFROY DE LA TOUR-LANDRY

HIT is a noble and a faire thinge for a man or a woman to see and beholde hem self in the mirrour of auncient stories, the whiche hathe ben

wretin bi oure aunsetters forto shewe us good en-saumples that thei dede to leue and to eschewe the euelle. And, doughtres, y saie this for y am olde, and haue leued longe, and see moche more of the world thanne ye.

— *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry.*

Edited by Thomas Wright, Esq.

THE HOSPITAL

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

THE southeast chamber was the Library Hospital. Every scholar should have a book infirmary attached to his library. There should find a peaceable refuge the many books, invalids from their birth, which are sent "with the best regards of the Author"; the respected, but unpresentable cripples which have lost a cover; the odd volumes of honoured sets which go mourning all their days for their lost brother; the school-books which have been so often the subjects of assault and battery, that they look as if the police court must know them by heart; these and still more the pictured story-books, beginning with Mother Goose (which a dear old friend of mine has just been amusing his philosophic leisure with turning most ingeniously and happily into the tongues of Virgil and Homer), will be precious mementos by and by,

when children and grandchildren come along. What would I not give for that dear little paper-bound quarto, in large and most legible type, on certain pages of which the tender hand that was the shield of my infancy had crossed out with deep black marks something awful, probably about Bears, such as once tore two-and-forty of us little folks for making faces, and the very name of which made us hide our heads under the bed-clothes.

— *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table.*

LIKE A TILLED FIELD

THOMAS CARLYLE

VISIBLE and tangible products of the Past, again, I reckon-up to the extent of three: Cities, with their Cabinets and Arsenals; then tilled Fields, to either or to both of which divisions Roads with their Bridges may belong; and thirdly — Books. In which third truly, the last invented, lies a worth far surpassing that of the two others. Wondrous indeed is the virtue of a true Book. Not like a dead city of stones, yearly crumbling, yearly needing repair; more like a tilled field, but then a spiritual field: like a spiritual tree, let me rather say, it stands from year to year, and from age to age (we have Books that already number some hundred-and-fifty human ages); and yearly comes its new

produce of leaves (Commentaries, Deductions, Philosophical, Political Systems; or were it only Sermons, Pamphlets, Journalistic Essays), every one of which is talismanic and thaumaturgic, for it can persuade men. O thou who art able to write a Book, which once in two centuries or oftener, there is a man gifted to do, envy not him whom they name City-builder, and inexpressibly pity him whom they name Conqueror or City-burner! Thou too art a Conqueror and Victor; but of the true sort, namely over the Devil; thou too hast built what will outlast all marble and metal, and be a wonder-bringing City of the Mind, a Temple and Seminary and Prophetic Mount, whereto all kindreds of the Earth will pilgrim. — Fool! Why journeyest thou wearisomely, in thy antiquarian fervour, to gaze on the stone pyramids of Geezā or the clay ones of Sacchara? These stand there, as I can tell thee, idle and inert, looking over the Desert, foolishly enough, for the last three-thousand years: but canst thou not open thy Hebrew Bible, then, or even Luther's Version thereof?

— *Sartor Resartus.*

PHILOBIBLON

"And because it principally treats of books, we have chosen after the fashion of the ancient Romans fondly to name it by a Greek word *Philobiblon*." — RICHARD DE BURY.

AIDS TO THOUGHT

JULIUS C. HARE

FOR my own part, I have ever gained the most profit, and the most pleasure also, from the books which have made me think the most: and, when the difficulties have once been overcome, these are the books which have struck the deepest root, not only in my memory and understanding, but likewise in my affections. For this point too should be taken into account. We are wont to think slightly of that, which it costs us a slight effort to win. When a maiden is too forward, her admirer deems it time to draw back. Whereas whatever has associated itself with the arousal and activity of our better nature, with the important and memorable epochs in our lives, whether moral or intellectual, is, — to cull a sprig from the beautiful passage in which Wordsworth describes the growth of Michael's love for his native hills, —

Our living being, even more
Than our own blood, and, — could it less? — retains
Strong hold on our affections, is to us
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

— *Guesses at Truth.*

SALVETE, LIBRI, SINE DOCTORE

THOMAS FULLER

SOLOMON saith truly, "Of making many books there is no end;" so insatiable is the thirst of men therein: as also endless is the desire of many in buying and reading them. But we come to our rules.

1. *It is a vanity to persuade the world one hath much learning by getting a large library.* As soon shall I believe every one is valiant that hath a well furnished armory. I guess good housekeeping by the smoking, not the number of the tunnels, as knowing that many of them (built merely for uniformity) are without chimneys, and more without fires. Once a dunce, void of learning but full of books, flouted a library-less scholar with these words, — *Salve, doctor sine libris*: but the next day the scholar coming into this jeerer's study crowded with books, — *Salvete, libri*, saith he, *sine doctore*.

2. *Few books well selected are best.* Yet, as a certain fool bought all the pictures that came out, because he might have his choice; such is the vain humour of many men in gathering of books: yet when they have done all, they miss their end, it being in the editions of authors as in the fashions of clothes, when a man thinks he hath gotten the

latest and newest, presently another newer comes out.

3. *Some books are only cursorily to be tasted of.* Namely, first voluminous books, the task of a man's life to read them over; secondly, auxiliary books, only to be repaired to on occasions; thirdly, such as are mere pieces of formality, so that if you look on them you look through them; and he that peeps through the casement of the index sees as much as if he were in the house. But the laziness of those cannot be excused who perfunctorily pass over authors of consequence, and only trade in their tables of contents. These, like city-cheaters, having gotten the names of all country gentlemen, make silly people believe they have long lived in those places where they never were, and flourish with skill in those authors they never seriously studied.

4. *The genius of the author is commonly discovered in the dedicatory epistle.* Many place the purest grain in the mouth of the sack for chapmen to handle or buy; and from the dedication one may probably guess at the work, saving some rare and peculiar exceptions. Thus, when once a gentleman admired how so pithy, learned, and witty a dedication was matched to a dull, flat, foolish book: "In truth," said another, "they may be well matched together, for I profess they are nothing akin."

5. *Proportion an hour's meditation to an hour's*

reading of a staple author. This makes a man master of his learning, and dispirits the book into the scholar. The King of Sweden never filed his men above six deep in one company, because he would not have them lie in useless clusters in his army, but so that every particular soldier might be drawn out into service. Books that stand thin on the shelves, yet so as the owner of them can bring forth every one of them into use, are better than far bigger libraries.

6. *Learning hath gained most by those books by which the printer hath lost.* Arias Montanus, in printing the Hebrew Bible (commonly called the Bible of the King of Spain), much wasted himself, and was accused in the court of Rome for his good deed, and being cited thither, *pro tantorum laborum præmio vix veniam impetravit*. Likewise Christopher Plantin, by printing of his curious interlineary Bible in Antwerp, through the unreasonable actions of the king's officers, sunk and almost ruined his estate. And our worthy English knight who set forth the golden-mouthed Father in a silver print was a loser by it.

7. *Whereas foolish pamphlets prove most beneficial to the printers.* When a French printer complained that he was utterly undone by printing a solid, serious book of Rabelais concerning phisic, Rabelais, to make him recompence, made that his

jesting, scurrilous work, which repaired the printer's loss with advantage. Such books the world swarms too much with. When one had set out a witless pamphlet, writing *Finis* at the end thereof, another wittily wrote beneath it,

. . . "Nay, there thou liest, my friend,
In writing foolish books there is no end."

And surely such scurrilous, scandalous papers do more than conceivable mischief. First, their lusciousness puts many palates out of taste, that they can never after relish any solid and wholesome writers; secondly, they cast dirt on the faces of many innocent persons, which, dried on by continuance of time, can never after be washed off; thirdly, the pamphlets of this age may pass for records with the next (because publicly uncontrolled), and what we laugh at, our children may believe; fourthly, grant the things true they jeer at, yet this music is unlawful in any Christian church, to play upon the sins and miseries of others, the fitter object of the elegies and the satires of all truly religious.

But what do I speaking against multiplicity of books in this age, who trespass in this nature myself? What was a learned man's compliment, may serve for my confession and conclusion:—
*Multi mei similes hoc morbo laborant, ut cum scribere
nesciant tamen a scribendo temperare non possint.*

— *The State.*

THROW IT IN THE FIRE, YOUNG MAN

ROBERT SOUTHEY

I HAVE something to say to all classes of Readers: and, therefore, having thus begun to speak of one, with that class I will proceed. It is to the youthful part of my lectors — (why not lectors as well as auditors?) it is *virginibus puerisque* that I now address myself. Young Readers, you whose hearts are open, whose understandings are not yet hardened, and whose feelings are neither exhausted nor encrusted by the world, take from me a better rule than any professors of criticism will teach you!

Would you know whether the tendency of a book is good or evil, examine in what state of mind you lay it down. Has it induced you to suspect that what you have been accustomed to think unlawful may after all be innocent, and that that may be harmless which you have hitherto been taught to think dangerous? Has it tended to make you dissatisfied and impatient under the control of others; and disposed you to relax in that self-government, without which both the laws of God and man tell us there can be no virtue — and consequently no happiness? Has it attempted to abate your admiration and reverence for what is great and good, and to diminish in you the love of your country and your fellow-creatures? Has it addressed

itself to your pride, your vanity, your selfishness, or any other of your evil propensities? Has it defiled the imagination with what is loathsome, and shocked the heart with what is monstrous? Has it disturbed the sense of right and wrong which the Creator has implanted in the human soul? If so — if you are conscious of any or all of these effects, — or if, having escaped from all you have felt that such were the effects it was intended to produce, throw the book in the fire, whatever name it may bear in the title page! Throw it in the fire, young man, though it should have been the gift of a friend! young lady, away with the whole set, though it should be the prominent furniture of a rosewood bookcase! — *Common-place Book.*

SIR, SAID DR. JOHNSON

SAMUEL JOHNSON

“I WOULD put a child into a library (where no unfit books are), and let him read at his choice. A child should not be discouraged from reading anything that he takes a liking to, from a notion that it is above his reach. If that be the case, the child will soon find it out and desist; if not, he of course gains the instruction; which is so much the more likely to come, from the inclination with which he takes up the study.”

He said, "It is strange that there should be so little reading in the world, and so much writing. People in general do not willingly read, if they can have anything else to amuse them. There must be an external impulse; emulation, or vanity, or avarice. The progress which the understanding makes through a book, has more pain than pleasure in it. Language is scanty, and inadequate to express the nice gradations and mixtures of our feelings. No man reads a book of science from pure inclination. The books that we do read with pleasure are light compositions, which contain a quick succession of events. However, I have this year read all Virgil through."

He said, that for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, "what we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read." He told us, he read Fielding's "Amelia" through, without stopping. He said, "if a man begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it, to go to the beginning. He may perhaps not feel again the inclination."

Dr. Johnson advised me to-day, to have as many books about me as I could; that I might read upon any subject upon which I had a desire for instruction at the time. "What you read *then* (said he), you will remember; but if you have not a book immediately ready, and the subject moulds in your mind, it is a chance if you have again a desire to study it." He added, "If a man never has an eager desire for instruction, he should prescribe a task for himself. But it is better when a man reads from immediate inclination."

Mr. Levet this day showed me Dr. Johnson's library, which was contained in two garrets over his chambers, where Lintot, son of the celebrated bookseller of that name, had formerly his warehouse. I found a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion. The floor was strewn with manuscript leaves, in Johnson's own hand-writing, which I beheld with a degree of veneration, supposing they perhaps might contain portions of the Rambler, or of Rasselas. I observed an apparatus for chymical experiments, of which Johnson was all his life very fond. The place seemed to be very favourable for retirement and meditation. Johnson told me that he went up thither without mentioning it to his servant when he wanted to study, secure from interruption; for

he would not allow his servant to say he was not at home when he really was.

— *Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson.*

TRUTH AND FICTION

THOMAS JEFFERSON

August 3, 1771.

WE never reflect whether the story we read be truth or fiction. If the painting be lively, and a tolerable picture of nature, we are thrown into a reverie, from which if we awaken it is the fault of the writer. I appeal to every reader of feeling and sentiment whether the fictitious murder of Duncan by Macbeth in Shakespeare does not excite in him as great a horror of villainy, as the real one of Henry IV. by Ravaillac as related by Davila? And whether the fidelity of Nelson and generosity of Blandford in Marmontel do not dilate his breast and elevate his sentiments as much as any similar incident which real history can furnish? Does he not, in fact, feel himself a better man while reading them, and privately covenant to copy the fair example? We neither know nor care whether Laurence Sterne really went to France, whether he was there accosted by the Franciscan, at first rebuked him unkindly, and then gave him a peace-offering; or whether the whole be not fiction. In either case

we equally are sorrowful at the rebuke, and secretly resolve *we* will never do so; we are pleased with the subsequent atonement, and view with emulation a soul candidly acknowledging its fault and making a just reparation. Considering history as a moral exercise, her lessons would be too infrequent if confined to real life. Of those recorded by historians few incidents have been attended with such circumstances as to excite in any high degree this sympathetic emotion of virtue. We are, therefore, wisely framed to be as warmly interested for a fictitious as for a real personage. The field of imagination is thus laid open to our use and lessons may be formed to illustrate and carry home to the heart every moral rule of life. Thus a lively and lasting sense of filial duty is more effectually impressed on the mind of a son or daughter by reading *King Lear*, than by all the dry volumes of ethics, and divinity that ever were written. — *Letter to Robert Skipwith.*

OF BOOKS

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE

I SEEK, in the reading of books, only to please myself by an irreproachable diversion; or if I study, it is for no other science than what treats of the knowledge of myself, and instructs me how to live and die well:—

Has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus.

I do not bite my nails about the difficulties I meet with in my reading; after a charge or two I give them over. Should I insist upon them, I should both lose myself and time; for I have an impatient understanding that must be satisfied at once; what I do not discern at first, by persisting, becomes still more obscure. I do nothing without gaiety; continuation, and a too obstinate endeavour, darkens, stupifies, and tires my judgment. My sight is confounded and dissipated with poring; I must withdraw it, and refer the discovery to new attempts; just as, to judge rightly of the lustre of scarlet, we are taught to pass it lightly over with the eye, in running it over at several sudden and reiterated views and glances. If one book does not please me, I take another, and never meddle with any but at such times as I am weary of doing nothing. I care not much for new ones, because the old seem fuller, and of stronger reason; neither do I much tamper with Greek authors, for my judgment loves not to occupy itself on matters which I know but superficially. Amongst those that are simply pleasant of the moderns, Boccaccio's Decameron, Rabelais, and the Basia of Johannes Secundus, if those may be ranged under that title, are worth reading. As to the Amadis, and such kind of stuff, they had not the credit to take me, so much

as in my childhood. And I will moreover say (whether boldly or rashly), that this old, heavy soul of mine, is now no longer delighted with Ariosto, no, nor with the good fellow Ovid; his facility and invention, with which I was formerly so ravished, are now of no relish, and I can hardly have the patience to read him. I speak my opinion freely of all things, even of those that, perhaps, exceed my capacity, and that I do not conceive to be in anywise under my jurisdiction. The judgment I deliver is to show the measure of my own sight, and not that of the things. When I find myself disgusted with Plato's *Axiochus*, as with a work, considering who the author was, without force, my judgment does not believe itself; it is not so arrogant as to oppose the authority of so many other famous judgments of antiquity, which it considers as its directors and masters, and with whom it is rather content to err; in such a case it condemns itself, either for stopping at the outer bark, not being able to penetrate to the heart, or for considering it by some false light, and is content with securing itself from trouble and error only; and, as to its own weakness, does frankly acknowledge and confess it. It thinks it gives a just interpretation, according to the appearance that its conceptions present to it; but they are weak and imperfect. Most of the Fables of

Æsop have several meanings; those who mythologized them chose some aspect that quadrates well to the Fable; but for the most part, 'tis but the first face that presents itself, and but superficial; there yet remain others more lively, essential, and profound, into which they have not been able to penetrate; and just so do I.

As to Cicero, those of his works that are most useful to my design are they that treat of philosophy, especially moral. But, boldly to confess the truth (for since one has stepped over the barriers of impudence there is no checking one's self), his way of writing, and that of all other long-winded authors, appears to me very tedious; for his prefaces, definitions, divisions, and etymologies, take up the greatest part of his work; whatever there is of life and marrow is smothered and lost in the preparation. When I have spent an hour in reading him (which is a great deal for me), and try to recollect what I have thence extracted of juice and substance, for the most part I find nothing but wind; for he is not yet come to the arguments that serve to his purpose, and the reasons that should properly help to loose the knot I would untie. For me, who only desire to become more wise, not more learned or eloquent, these logical or Aristotelian dispositions of parts are of no use. I would have a man begin with the main proposition, and that

wherein the force of the argument lies; I know well enough what death and pleasure are; let no man give himself the trouble to anatomize them to me; I look for good and solid reasons at the first dash to instruct me how to stand the shock, and resist them; to which purpose neither grammatical subtleties, nor the ingenious contexture of words and arguments, are of any use at all. I am for discourses that give the first charge into the heart of the doubt; his languish about his subjects and delay his expectation. They are proper for the schools, for the bar, for the pulpit, where we have leisure to nod, and may awake a quarter of an hour after, time enough to find again the thread of the discourse. It is necessary to speak after this manner to judges, whom a man has a design, right or wrong, to incline to favour his cause; to children and common people, to whom a man must say all he can, and try what effects his eloquence can produce. I would not have an author make it his business to render me attentive; or that he should cry out fifty times *O yes*, as the clerks and heralds do. The Romans, in their religious exercises, began with *Hoc age*; as we in ours do with *Sursum corda*, which are so many words lost to me; I come thither already fully prepared from my chamber. I need no alurement, no invitation, no sauce; I eat the meat raw,

and, instead of whetting my appetite by these preparatives, they tire and pall it. Will the license of the time excuse the sacrilegious boldness of my holding the dialoguisms of Plato himself to be also heavy, and too much stifling his matter; and my lamenting so much time lost by a man who had so many better things to say, in so many long and needless preliminary interlocutions? My ignorance will better excuse me in this, that I see nothing in the beauty of his language. I would generally choose books that use sciences, not such as only lead to them. The two first, and Pliny, and their like, have nothing of this *Hoc age*; they will have to do with men already instructed; or if they have, 'tis a substantial *Hoc age*, and that has a body by itself.

The historians, however, are my true men; for they are pleasant and easy; where immediately man in general, the knowledge of whom I hunt after, appears more lively and entire than anywhere besides; the variety and truth of his internal qualities, in gross and piecemeal, the diversity of means by which he is united and knit, and the accidents that threaten him. Now those that write lives, by reason they insist more upon counsels than events, more upon what sallies from within than upon that which happens without, are the most proper for my reading; and, therefore, above

all others, Plutarch is the man for me. I am very sorry we have not a dozen Laertiuses, or that he was not further extended, or better understood. For I am equally curious to know the lives and fortunes of the great instructors of the world, as to know the diversities of their doctrines and opinions. In this class of study, the reading of histories, a man must tumble over, without distinction, all sorts of authors, ancient and modern, vulgar and classical, there to know the things of which they variously treat. But Cæsar, in my opinion, particularly deserves to be studied, not for the knowledge of the history only, but for himself, so great an excellence and perfection he has above all the rest, though Sallust be one of the number. In truth, I read this author with somewhat more reverence and respect than is usually allowed to human writings; one while considering him and his person, by his actions and miraculous greatness, and another in the purity and inimitable polish of his language and style, wherein he not only excells all other historians, as Cicero confesses, but peradventure even Cicero himself; speaking of his enemies with so much sincerity in his judgment that, the false colours with which he strives to palliate his ill cause, and the pollution of his pestilent ambition, excepted, I think there is no fault to be objected against him, saving this, that

he speaks too sparingly of himself, seeing so many great things could not have been performed under his conduct, but that he himself must necessarily have had a greater share in the execution than he makes mention of.

I love historians who are either very unsophisticated or very excellent. The former, who have nothing of their own to mix with it, and who only make it their business to make a faithful collection of all that comes to their knowledge, and faithfully to record all things without choice or prejudice, leave to us the entire judgment of discerning the truth of things. Such, for example, amongst others is honest Froissart, who has proceeded in his undertaking with so frank a plainness that, having committed an error, he is not ashamed to confess and correct it in the place where the finger has been laid, and who represents to us even the variety of rumours that were then spread abroad, and the different reports that were made to him; which the naked and unformed matter of history, and of which every one may make his profit, according to his proportion of understanding. The more excellent sort of historians have judgment to pick out what is most worthy to be known; and, of two reports, to examine which is the more likely to be true. From the conditions of princes and their humours they conclude the counsels and attribute

to them words proper for the occasion; and such have title to assume the authority of regulating our belief to what they themselves believe; but certainly this privilege belongs to very few. The middle sort of historians (of which the most part are) spoil all; they will chew our meat for us; they take upon themselves to judge of, and consequently to bias history to their own fancy; for, if the judgment partially lean to one side, a man cannot avoid wresting and writhing his narrative to that bias. They undertake to choose things worthy to be known, and yet very often conceal from us such a word, such a private action, as would much better instruct us; omit, as incredible, such things as they do not understand; and others, perhaps, because they cannot express them in good French or Latin. Let them, in God's name, display their eloquence, and judge according to their own fancy; but let them, withal, leave us something to judge of after them, and neither alter nor disguise, by their abridgments and selections, anything of the substance of the matter; but deliver it to us pure and entire in all its dimensions.

— *Essays, Translated by W. C. Hazlitt*

TO THOSE WHO WRITE

"Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind."

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

COOKS, WARRIORS, AND AUTHORS

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

WHAT can books do for us? Dr. Johnson, the least pedantic of men, put the whole matter into a nutshell (a cocoanut shell, if you will — Heaven forbid that I should seek to compress the great Doctor within any narrower limits than my metaphor requires!), when he wrote that a book should teach us either to enjoy life or endure it. 'Give us enjoyment!' 'Teach us endurance!' Hearken to the ceaseless demand and the perpetual prayer of an ever unsatisfied and always suffering humanity!

How is a book to answer the ceaseless demand?

Self-forgetfulness is of the essence of enjoyment, and the author who would confer pleasure must possess the art, or know the trick, of destroying for the time the reader's own personality. Undoubtedly the easiest way of doing this is by the creation of a host of rival personalities — hence the number and the popularity of novels. Whenever a novelist fails his book is said to flag; that is, the reader suddenly (as in skating) comes bump down upon his own personality, and curses the

unskillful author. No lack of characters and continual motion is the easiest recipe for a novel, which, like a beggar, should always be kept 'moving on.' Nobody knew this better than Fielding, whose novels, like most good ones, are full of inns.

When those who are addicted to what is called 'improving reading' inquire of you petulantly why you cannot find change of company and scene in books of travel, you should answer cautiously that when books of travel are full of inns, atmosphere, and motion, they are as good as any novel; nor is there any reason in the nature of things why they should not always be so, though experience proves the contrary.

Cooks, warriors, and authors must be judged by the effects they produce: toothsome dishes, glorious victories, pleasant books — these are our demands. We have nothing to do with ingredients, tactics, or methods. We have no desire to be admitted into the kitchen, the council, or the study. The cook may clean her saucepans how she pleases — the warrior place his men as he likes — the author handle his material or weave his plot as best he can — when the dish is served we only ask, Is it good? when the battle has been fought, Who won? when the book comes out, Does it read?

Authors ought not to be above being reminded that it is their first duty to write agreeably — some

very disagreeable men have succeeded in doing so, and there is therefore no need for anyone to despair. Every author, to be grave or gay, should try to make his book as ingratiating as possible. Reading is not a duty, and has consequently no business to be made disagreeable. Nobody is under any obligation to read any other man's book.

— *Obiter Dicta.*

AN AFFECTIONATE EXHORTATION

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

WITH no other privilege than that of sympathy and sincere good wishes, I would address an affectionate exhortation to the youthful literati, grounded on my own experience. It will be but short; for the beginning, middle, and end converge to one charge: NEVER PURSUE LITERATURE AS A TRADE. With the exception of one extraordinary man, I have never known an individual, least of all an individual of genius, healthy or happy without a *profession*, *i.e.*, some *regular* employment, which does not depend on the will of the moment, and which can be carried on so far *mechanically* that an average quantum only of health, spirits, and intellectual exertion are requisite to its faithful discharge. Three hours of leisure, unannoyed by any alien anxiety, and looked for-

ward to with delight as a change and recreation, will suffice to realize in literature a larger product of what is truly *genial*, than weeks of compulsion. Money and immediate reputation form only an arbitrary and accidental end of literary labour. The *hope* of increasing them by any given exertion will often prove a stimulant to industry; but the *necessity* of acquiring them will in all works of genius convert the stimulant into a *narcotic*. Motives by excess reverse their very nature, and instead of exciting, stun and stupify the mind. For it is one contradistinction of genius from talent, that its predominant end is always comprised in the means; and this is one of the many points, which establish an analogy between genius and virtue. Now though talents may exist without genius, yet as genius cannot exist, certainly not manifest itself, without talents, I would advise every scholar, who feels the genial power working within him, so far to make a division between the two, as that he should devote his *talents* to the acquirement of a competence in some known trade or profession, and his genius to objects of his tranquil and un-biased choice; while the consciousness of being actuated in both alike by the sincere desire to perform his duty, will alike ennoble both. "My dear young friend," (I would say) "suppose yourself established in any honourable occupation. From

the manufactory or counting-house, from the law-court, or from having visited your last patient, you return at evening,

“Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of home
Is sweetest”

to your family, prepared for its social enjoyments, with the very countenances of your wife and children brightened, and their voice of welcome made doubly welcome, by the knowledge that, as far as *they* are concerned, you have satisfied the demands of the day by the labour of the day. Then, when you retire into your study, in the books on your shelves you revisit so many venerable friends with whom you can converse. Your own spirit scarcely less free from personal anxieties than the great minds, that in those books are still living for you! Even your writing desk with its blank paper and all its other implements will appear as a chain of flowers, capable of linking your feelings as well as thoughts to events and characters past or to come; not a chain of iron, which binds you down to think of the future and the remote by recalling the claims and feelings of the peremptory present. But why should I say *retire*? The habits of daily life and intercourse with the stir of the world will tend to give you such self-command, that the presence of your family will be no inter-

ruption. Nay, the social silence, or undisturbing voices of a wife or sister, will be like a restorative atmosphere, or soft music which moulds a dream without becoming its object. If facts are required to prove the possibility of combining weighty performances in literature with full and independent employment, the works of Cicero and Xenophon among the ancients; of Sir Thomas Moore, Bacon, Baxter, or to refer at once to later and contemporary instances, Darwin and Roscoe, are at once decisive of the question. — *Biographia Literaria*.

OH, MY YOUNG ASPIRANT

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

THERE is perhaps no career or life so charming as that of a successful man of letters. If you like the town, live in the town, and do your work there; if you like the country, choose the country. It may be done on the top of the mountain or in the bottom of a pit. It is compatible with the rolling of the sea and with the motion of a railway. The clergyman, the lawyer, the doctor, the member of Parliament, the clerk in the public office, the tradesman, and even his assistant in the shop, must dress in accordance with certain fixed laws; but the author need sacrifice to no grace, hardly even to Propriety. He is subject to no bonds such

as those which bind other men. Who else is free from all shackle as to hours? The judge must sit at ten. . . . The author may do his work at five in the morning when he is fresh from bed, or at three in the morning before he goes there. And the author wants no capital, and encounters no risks. But it is in the consideration which he enjoys that the successful author finds his richest reward. He is, if not of equal rank, yet of equal standing with the highest; and if he be open to the amenities of society, may choose his own circles. He without money can enter doors which are closed against almost all but him and the wealthy. I have often heard it said that in this country the man of letters is not recognised. I believe the meaning of this to be that men of letters are not often invited to be knights and baronets. I do not think that they wish it; and if they had it they would, as a body, lose much more than they would gain. I do not at all desire to have letters put after my name, or to be called Sir Anthony, but if my friends Tom Hughes and Charles Reade became Sir Thomas and Sir Charles, I do not know how I might feel, — or how my wife might feel, if we were left unbedecked. As it is, the man of letters who would be selected for titular honour, if such bestowal of honours were customary, receives from the general respect of those around

him a much more pleasant recognition of his worth.

If this be so, — if it be true that the career of the successful literary man be thus pleasant, — it is not wonderful that many should attempt to win the prize. But how is a man to know whether or not he has within him the qualities necessary for such a career? He makes an attempt, and fails; repeats his attempt and fails again! So many have succeeded at last who have failed more than once or twice! Who will tell him the truth as to himself? Who has power to find out that truth? The hard man sends him off without a scruple to that office-stool; the soft man assures him that there is much merit in his MS.

Oh, my young aspirant, — if ever such a one should read these pages, — be sure that no one can tell you! To do so it would be necessary not only to know what there is now within you, but also to foresee what time will produce there. This, however, I think, may be said to you, without any doubt as to the wisdom of the counsel given, that if it be necessary for you to live by your work, do not begin by trusting to literature. Take the stool in the office as recommended to you by the hard man; and then, in such leisure hours as may belong to you, let the praise which has come from the lips of that soft man induce you to persevere

in your literary attempts. Should you fail, then your failure will not be fatal, — and what better could you have done with the leisure hours had you not so failed? Such double toil, you will say, is severe. Yes, but if you want this thing, you must submit to severe toil. — *Autobiography*.

STERNE'S WAY

LAURENCE STERNE

York, Jany. 1, (1760)

SR.

I dare say you will wonder to receive an Epistle from me, and the subject of it will surprise you still more, because it is to tell you something about Books.

There are two volumes just published here, which have made a great noise, and have had a prodigious run; for, in two days after they came out, the Bookseller sold two hundred, and continues selling them very fast. It is the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, which the Author told me last night at our concert he had sent up to London, so perhaps you have seen it; If you have not seen it, pray get it and read it, because it has a great character as a witty smart Book, and if you think so, your good word in Town will do the Author, I am sure, great service. You must under-

stand he is a kind and generous friend of mine, whom Providence has attach'd to me in this part of the World, where I am a stranger — and I could not think how I could make a better return, than by endeavouring to make you a Friend to him and his performance; this is all my excuse for this Liberty, which I hope you will excuse. His name is Sterne, a Gentleman of Great Preferment, and a Prebendary of the Church of York, and has a great character, in these parts, as a man of Learning and Wit; the Graver people however, say 'tis not fit for young Ladies to read his Book, so perhaps you'll think it not fit for a young Lady to recommend it; however the Nobility and great Folks stand up mightily for it, and say 'tis a good Book, tho' a little tawdry in some places.

I am, dear Sir,

Yr. most obdt. &

humble Servant.

— *Philobiblon Society Miscellany.*

BESIDE THE FIRE

" Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
" Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round "

— COWPER

CANDLE-LIGHT

CHARLES LAMB

HAIL, candle-light! without disparagement to sun or moon, the kindest luminary of the three — if we may not rather style thee their radiant deputy, mild viceroy of the moon! — We love to read, talk, sit silent, eat, drink, sleep, by candle-light. They are everybody's sun and moon. This is our peculiar and household planet. Wanting it, what savage unsocial nights must our ancestors have spent, wintering in caves and unilluminated fastnesses! They must have lain about and grumbled at one another in the dark. What repartees could have passed, when you must have felt about for a smile, and handled a neighbour's cheek to be sure that he understood it? This accounts for the seriousness of the elder poetry. It has a sombre cast (try Hesiod or Ossian), derived from the tradition of those unlantern'd nights. Jokes came in with candles. . . .

There is absolutely no such thing as reading, but by a candle. We have tried the affectation of a book at noon-day in gardens, and in sultry arbours; but it was labour thrown away. Those gay

motes in the beam come about you, hovering and teasing, like so many coquettes, that will have you all to their self, and are jealous of your abstractions. By the mid-night taper, the writer digests his meditations. By the same light, we must approach to their perusal, if we would catch the flame, the odour. It is a mockery, all that is reported of the influential Phoebus. No true poem ever owed its birth to the sun's light. They are abstracted works —

“ Things that were born, when none but the still night,
And his dumb candle, saw his pinching throes.”

Marry, daylight — daylight might furnish the images, the crude material; but for the fine shapings, the true turning and filing (as mine author hath it), they must be content to hold their inspiration of the candle. The mild internal light, that reveals them, like fires on the domestic hearth, goes out in the sunshine. Night and silence call out the starry fancies. Milton's Morning Hymn in Paradise, we would hold a good wager, was penned at midnight; and Taylor's rich description of a sunrise smells decidedly of the taper. Even ourself, in these our humbler lucubrations, tune our best measured cadences (Prose has her cadences) not unfrequently to the charm of the drowsier watchman, “ blessing the doors;” or the wild sweeps of wind at midnight. Even now a loftier specu-

lation than we have yet attempted, courts our endeavours. We would indite something about the Solar System. — *Betty, bring the candles.*

— *Popular Fallacies, That We Should Lie
Down with the Lamb.*

LADY JANE'S GENTLE SCHOOLMASTER

ROGER ASCHAM

BEFORE I went into Germany, I came to Broadgate in Leicestershire, to take my leave of that noble lady Jane Grey, to whom I was exceeding much beholding. Her parents, the duke and duchess, with all the household, gentlemen and gentlewomen, were hunting in the park. I found her in her chamber, reading *Phaedo Platonis* in Greek, and that with as much delight as some gentlemen would read a merry tale in Boccace. After salutation, and duty done, with some other talk, I asked her, why she would lose such pastime in the park? Smiling, she answered me; "I wist, all their sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure that I find in Plato. Alas! good folk, they never felt what true pleasure meant." "And how came you, madam," quoth I, "to this deep knowledge of pleasure? and what did chiefly allure you unto it, seeing not many women, but very few men, have attained thereunto?" "I will

tell you," quoth she, "and tell you a truth, which perchance ye will marvel at. One of the greatest benefits that ever God gave me, is, that he sent me so sharp and severe parents, and so gentle a schoolmaster. For when I am in presence either of father or mother; whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand, or go, eat, drink, be merry, or sad, be sewing, playing, dancing, or doing anything else; I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, and number, even so perfectly, as God made the world; or else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea presently sometimes with pinches, nips, and bobs, and other ways (which I will not name for the honour I bear them) so without measure misordered, that I think myself in hell, till time come that I must go to Mr. Elmer; who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to learning, that I think all the time nothing whiles I am with him. And when I am called from him, I fall on weeping, because whatsoever I do else but learning, is full of grief, trouble, fear, and wholly misliking unto me. And thus my book hath been so much my pleasure, and bringeth daily to me more pleasure and more, that in respect of it, all other pleasures, in very deed, be but trifles and troubles unto me."

— *The Schoolmaster.*

A GARDEN LIBRARY

EDMUND GOSSE

I HAVE heard that the late Mr. Edward Solly was so anxious to fly all outward noise that he built himself a library in his garden. I have been told that the books stood there in perfect order, with the rose-spray flapping at the window, and great Japanese vases exhaling such odours as most annoy an insect nostril. The very bees would come to the window, and sniff, and boom indignantly away again. The silence there was perfect. It must have been in such a secluded library that Christian Mentzelius was at work when he heard the male book-worm flap his wings, and crow like a cock in calling to his mate. I feel sure that even Mentzelius, a very courageous writer, would hardly pretend that he could hear such a "shadow of all sound" elsewhere. That is the library I should like to have. In my sleep, "where dreams are multitude," I sometimes fancy that one day I shall have a library in a garden. The phrase seems to contain the whole felicity of man — "a library in a garden!" It sounds like having a castle in Spain, or a sheep-walk in Arcadia, and I suppose that merely to wish for it is to be what indignant journalists call "a faddling hedonist."

— *Gossip in a Library.*

SEMPER MUTABILE

ANDREW LANG

SELLING books is nearly as bad as losing friends, than which life has no worse sorrow. A book is a friend whose face is constantly changing. If you read it when you are recovering from an illness, and return to it years after, it is changed surely, with the change in yourself. As a man's tastes and opinions are developed his books put on a different aspect. He hardly knows the "Poems and Ballads" he used to declaim, and cannot recover the enigmatic charm of "Sordello." Books change like friends, like ourselves, like everything; but they are most piquant in the contrasts they provoke, when the friend who gave them and wrote them is a success, though we laughed at him; a failure, though we believe in him; altered in any case, and estranged from his old self and old days. The vanished past returns when we look at the pages. The vicissitudes of years are printed and packed in a thin octavo, and the shivering ghosts of desire and hope return to their forbidden home in the heart and fancy. It is as well to have the power of recalling them always at hand, and to be able to take a comprehensive glance at the emotions which were so powerful and full of life, and now are more faded and of less account than the

memory of the dreams of childhood. It is because our books are friends that do change, and remind us of change, that we should keep them with us, even at a little inconvenience, and not turn them adrift in the world to find a dusty asylum in cheap bookstalls. We are a part of all that we have read, to parody the saying of Mr. Tennyson's Ulysses, and we owe some respect, and house-room at least, to the early acquaintances who have begun to bore us, and remind us of the vanity of ambition and the weakness of human purpose. Old school and college books even have a reproachful and salutary power of whispering how much a man knew, and at the cost of how much trouble, that he has absolutely forgotten, and is neither the better nor the worse for it. It will be the same in the case of books he is eager about now; though, to be sure, he will read with less care, and forget with an ease and readiness only to be acquired by practice. — *The Library*.

IN OLD AGE

JAMES T. FIELDS

I RECOLLECT there was much converse that day on the love of reading in old age, and Leigh Hunt observed that Sir Robert Walpole, seeing Mr. Fox busy in the library at Houghton, said to him: "And

you can read! Ah, how I envy you! I totally neglected the *habit* of reading when I was young, and now in my old age I cannot read a single page." Hunt himself was a man who could be "penetrated by a book." It was inspiring to hear him dilate over "Plutarch's Morals," and quote passages from that delightful essay on "The Tranquillity of the Soul." He had such reverence for the wisdom folded up on his library shelves, he declared that the very perusal of the *backs of his books* was "a discipline of humanity."

— *Yesterdays with Authors.*

HE BROUGHT HER TO BOSTON

JOHN WINTHROP

MR. HOPKINS, the governor of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife with him (a godly young woman, and of special parts), who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her divers years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. Her husband, being very loving and tender of her, was loath to grieve her; but he saw his error, when it was too late. For if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone

out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honourably in the place God had set her.

He brought her to Boston, and left her with her brother, one Mr. Yale, a merchant, to try what means he had here for her. But no help could be had.

— *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649.*

WE BOOKSELLERS

DANIEL MACMILLAN

BLESS your heart, MacLehose, you never surely thought you were working merely for bread! Don't you know that you are cultivating good taste amongst the natives of Glasgow; helping to unfold a love of the beautiful among those who are slaves to the useful, or what they call the useful? I look on you as a great teacher or prophet, doing work just of the kind that God has appointed you to do. No, no, Mac! that won't do. We booksellers, if we are faithful to our task, are trying to destroy, and are helping to destroy, all kinds of confusion, and are aiding our great Taskmaster to reduce the world into order, and beauty, and harmony. Bread we must have, and gain it by the sweat of our brow,

or of our brain, and that is noble, because God-appointed. Yet that is not all. As truly as God is, we are His ministers, and help to minister to the wellbeing of the spirits of men. At the same time it is our duty to manage our affairs wisely, keep our minds easy, and not trade beyond our means.

— *Memoir of Daniel Macmillan by Thomas Hughes.*

INTERRUPTIONS

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON

SUPPOSE that you are reading the Defence of Socrates in Plato, and have the whole scene before you as in a picture: the tribunal of the Five Hundred, the pure Greek architecture, the interested Athenian public, the odious Melitus, the envious enemies, the beloved and grieving friends whose names are dear to us, and immortal; and in the centre you see one figure draped like a poor man, in cheap and common cloth, that he wears winter and summer, with a face plain to downright ugliness, but an air of such genuine courage and self-possession that no acting could imitate it; and you hear the firm voice saying —

Τιμᾶται δ' οὖν μοι ἀνὴρ θανάτου εἶναι

You are just beginning the splendid paragraph where Socrates condemns himself to maintenance

in the Prytaneum, and if you can only be safe from interruption till it is finished, you will have one of those minutes of noble pleasure which are the rewards of intellectual toil. But if you are reading in the daytime in a house where there are women and children, or where people can fasten upon you for pottering details of business, you may be sure that you will *not* be able to get to the end of the passage without in some way or other being rudely awakened from your dream, and suddenly brought back into the common world. The loss intellectually is greater than anyone who has not suffered from it could imagine. People think that an interruption is merely the unhooking of an electric chain, and that the current will flow, when the chain is hooked on again, just as it did before. To the intellectual and imaginative student an interruption is not that; it is the destruction of a picture.

— *The Intellectual Life.*

THE NATURAL THING TO DO WITH A BOOK

WALTER BAGEHOT

THE instructiveness of the habit of desultory reading is sometimes not comprehended. S. T. Coleridge used to say that he felt a great superiority over those who had not read — and fondly

read — fairy tales in their childhood: he thought they wanted a sense which he possessed, the perception, or apperception — we do not know which he used to say it was — of the unity and wholeness of the universe. As to fairy tales, this is a hard saying; but as to desultory reading, it is certainly true. Some people have known a time in life when there was no book they could not read. The fact of its being a book went immensely in its favour. In early life there is an opinion that the obvious thing to do with a horse is to ride it; with a cake, to eat it; with sixpence, to spend it. A few boys carry this further, and think the natural thing to do with a book is to read it. There is an argument from design in the subject: if the book was not meant for that purpose, for what purpose was it meant? Of course, of any understanding of the works so perused there is no question or idea. There is a legend of Bentham, in his earliest childhood, climbing to the height of a huge stool and sitting there evening after evening, with two candles, engaged in the perusal of Rapin's history; it might as well have been any other book. The doctrine of utility had not then dawned on its immortal teacher; *cui bono* was an idea unknown to him. He would have been ready to read about Egypt, about Spain, about coals in Borneo, the teak-wood in India, the current in the river Mis-

issippi, on natural history or human history, on theology or morals, on the state of the Dark Ages or the state of the light ages, on Augustulus or Lord Chatham, on the first century or the seventeenth, on the moon, the millennium, or the whole duty of man. Just then, reading is an end in itself. At that time of life you no more think of a future consequence — of the remote, the very remote possibility of deriving knowledge from the perusal of a book, than you expect so great a result from spinning a pegtop. You spin the top, and you read the book; and these scenes of life are exhausted. In such studies, of all prose perhaps the best is history: one page is so like another, battle No. 1 is so much on a par with battle No. 2. Truth may be, as they say, stranger than fiction, abstractedly; but in actual books, novels are certainly odder and more astounding than correct history. It will be said, What is the use of this? why not leave the reading of great books till a great age? why plague and perplex childhood with complex facts remote from its experience and inapprehensible by its imagination? The reply is, that though in all great and combined facts there is much which childhood cannot thoroughly imagine, there is also in very many a great deal which can only be truly apprehended for the first time at that age. — *Literary Studies.*

OUR OLDEST POSSESSIONS

EDMUND GOSSE

It is a curious reflection, that the ordinary private person who collects objects of a modest luxury, has nothing about him so old as his books. If a wave of the rod made everything around him disappear that did not exist a century ago, he would suddenly find himself with one or two sticks of furniture, perhaps, but otherwise alone with his books. Let the work of another century pass, and certainly nothing but these little brown volumes would be left, so many caskets full of passion and tenderness, disappointed ambition, fruitless hope, self-torturing envy, conceit aware, in maddening lucid moments, of its own folly. I think that if Mentzelius had been worth his salt, those ears of his, which heard the book worm crow, might have caught the echo of a sigh from beneath many a pathetic vellum cover. There is something awful to me, of nights, and when I am alone, in thinking of all the souls imprisoned in the ancient books around me. Not one, I suppose, but was ushered into the world with pride and glee, with a flushed cheek and heightened pulse; not one enjoyed a career that in all points justified those ample hopes and flattering promises. — *Gossip in a Library.*

CRIMES AND CRIMINALS

JOHN HILL BURTON

To one shelf of the law library, however, an interest attaches which few are ready to deny — that devoted to the literature of Criminal Trials. It will go hard indeed, if, besides the reports of mere technicalities, there be not here some glimpse of the sad romances which lie at their heart; and, at all events, when the page passes a very slight degree beyond the strictly professional, the technicalities will be found mingled with abundant narrative. The State Trials, for instance — surely a lawyer's book — contains the material of a thousand romances: nor are all these attached to political offences; as, fortunately, the book is better than its name, and makes a virtuous effort to embrace all the remarkable trials coming within a long period covered by the collection. Some assistance may be got, at the same time, from minor luminaries, such as the Newgate Calender — not to be commended, certainly, for its literary merits, but full of matters strange and horrible, which, like the gloomy forest of the Castle of Indolence, "send forth a sleepy horror through the blood."

There are many other books where records of remarkable crimes are mixed up with much rubbish, as *The Terrific Register*, *God's Revenge*

against Murder, a little French book called *Histoire Générale des Larrons* (1623), and if the inquirer's taste turn toward maritime crimes, *The History of the Bucaniers*, by Esquemeling. A little work in four volumes, called *The Criminal Recorder*, by a student in the Inner Temple, can be commended as a sort of encyclopædia of this kind of literature. It professes — and is not far from accomplishing the profession — to give biographical sketches of notorious public characters, including "murderers, traitors, pirates, mutineers, incendiaries, defrauders, rioters, sharpers, highwaymen, footpads, pick-pockets, swindlers, housebreakers, coiners, receivers, extortioners, and other noted persons who have suffered the sentence of the law for criminal offences." By far the most luxurious book of this kind, however, in the English language, is Captain Johnston's *Lives of Highwaymen and Pirates*. It is rare to find it now complete. The old folio editions have been often mutilated by over use: the many later editions in octavo are mutilated by design of their editors; and for conveying any idea of the rough truthful descriptiveness of a book compiled in the palmy days of highway robbery, they are worthless.

All our literature of that nature must, however, yield to the French *Causes Célèbres*, a term rendered so significant by the value and interest of

the book it named, as to have been borrowed by writers in this country to render their works attractive. It must be noted as a reason for the success of this work, and also of the German collection by Feuerbach, that the despotic Continental method of procedure by secret inquiry affords much better material for narrative than ours by open trial. We make, no doubt, a great drama of a criminal trial. Everything is brought on the stage at once, and cleared off before an audience excited so as no player ever could excite; but it loses in reading; while the Continental inquiry, with its slow secret development of the plot, makes the better novel for the fireside.

There is a method by which, among ourselves, the trial can be imbedded in a narrative which may carry down to later generations a condensed reflection of that protracted expectation and excitement which disturb society during the investigations and trials occasioned by any great crime. This is by "illustrating" the trial, through a process resembling that which has been already supposed to have been applied to one of Watt's hymns. In this instance there will be all the newspaper scraps — all the hawker's broadsides — the portraits of the criminal, of the chief witnesses, the judges, the counsel, and the various other persons, — everything in literature or art that bears on the great question.

He who inherits or has been able to procure a collection of such illustrated trials, a century or so old, is deemed fortunate among collectors, for he can at any time raise up for himself the spectre as it were of the great mystery and exposure that for weeks was the absorbing topic of attraction to millions. The curtains are down—the fire burns bright—the cat purrs on the rug; Atticus, soused in his easy-chair, cannot be at the trouble of going to see Macbeth or Othello—he will sup full of horrors from his own stores. Accordingly he takes down an unseemly volume, characterised by a flabby obesity by reason of the unequal size of the papers contained in it, all being bound to the back, while the largest only reach the margin. The first thing at opening is the dingy-pea-green looking paragraph from the provincial newspaper, describing how the reapers, going to their work at dawn, saw the clay beaten with the marks of struggle, and, following the dictates of curiosity, saw a bloody rag sticking on a tree, the leaves also streaked with red, and, lastly, the instrument of violence hidden in the moss; next comes from another source the lamentations for a young woman who had left her home—then the excitement of putting that and that together—the search, and the discovery of the body. The next paragraph turns suspense into exulting wrath: the perpetrator

has been found with his bloody shirt on — a scowling murderous villain as ever was seen — an eminent poacher, and fit for anything. But the next paragraph turns the tables. The ruffian had his own secrets of what he had been about that night, and at last makes a clean breast. It would have been a bad business for him at any other time, but now he is a revealing angel, for he noted this and that in the course of his own little game, and gives justice the thread which leads to a wonderful romance, and brings home desperate crime to that quarter where, from rank, education, and profession, it was least likely to be found. Then comes the trial and the execution; and so, at a sitting, has been swallowed all that excitement which, at some time long ago, chained up the public in protracted suspense for weeks.

— *The Book Hunter.*

COMPLETE ESSAYS

A GOSSIP ON ROMANCE

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

IN anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our minds filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or of continuous thought. The words, if the book be eloquent, should run thenceforward in our ears like the noise of breakers, and the story, if it be a story, repeat itself in a thousand coloured pictures to the eye. It was for this last pleasure that we read so closely, and loved our books so dearly in the bright, troubled period of boyhood. Eloquence and thought, character and conversation, were but obstacles to brush aside as we dug blithely after a certain sort of incident, like a pig for truffles. For my part, I liked a story to begin with an old wayside inn, where, "toward the close of the year 17—," several gentlemen in three-cocked hats were playing bowls. A friend of mine preferred the Malabar coast in a storm, with a ship beating to windward, and a scowling fellow of Herculean proportions striding

along the beach; he, to be sure, was a private. This was further afield than my homekeeping fancy loved to travel, and designed altogether for a larger canvas than the tales that I affected. Give me a highwayman and I was full to the brim; a Jacobite would do, but the highwayman was my favourite dish. I can still hear that merry clatter of the hoofs along the moonlit lane; night and the coming of day are still related in my mind with the doings of John Rann or Jerry Abershaw; and the words "postchaise," the great "North road," "ostler," and "nag" still sound in my ears like poetry. One and all, at least, and each with his particular fancy, we read story-books in childhood, not for eloquence or character or thought, but for some quality of the brute incident. That quality was not mere bloodshed or wonder. Although each of these was welcome in its place, the charm for the sake of which we read depended on something different from either. My elders used to read novels aloud; and I can still remember four different passages which I heard, before I was ten, with the same keen and lasting pleasure. One I discovered long afterward to be the admirable opening of "What will he Do with it:" it was no wonder I was pleased with that. The other three still remain unidentified. One is a little vague; it was about a dark, tall house at night, and people groping on the

stairs by the light that escaped from the open door of a sick-room. In another, a lover left a ball, and went walking in a cool, dewey park, whence he could watch the lighted windows and the figures of the dancers as they moved. This was the most sentimental impression I think I had yet received, for a child is somewhat deaf to the sentimental. In the last, a poet, who had been tragically wrangling with his wife, walked forth on the sea-beach on a tempestuous night and witnessed the horrors of a wreck.¹ Different as they are, all these early favourites have a common note — they have all a touch of the romantic.

Drama is the poetry of conduct, romance the poetry of circumstance. The pleasure that we take in life is of two sorts — the active and the passive. Now we are conscious of a great command over our destiny; anon we are lifted up by the circumstance, as by a breaking wave, and dashed we know not how into the future. Now we are pleased by our conduct, anon merely pleased by our surroundings. It would be hard to say which of these modes of satisfaction is the more effective, but the latter is surely the more constant. Conduct is three parts of life, they say; but I think they put it high. There is a vast deal in life and

¹ Since traced by many obliging correspondents to the gallery of Charles Kingsley.

letters both, which is not immoral, but simply amoral; which either does not regard the human will at all, or deals with it in obvious and healthy relations; where the interest turns, not upon what a man shall choose to do, but on how he manages to do it; not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life. With such material as this it is impossible to build a play, for the serious theatre exists solely on moral ground, and is a standing proof of the dissemination of the human conscience. But it is possible to build, upon this ground, the most joyous of verses, and the most lively, beautiful, and buoyant tales.

One thing in life calls for another; there is a fitness in events and places. The sight of a pleasant harbour puts it in our mind to sit there. One place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and long rambles in the dew. The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it. And many of the happiest hours of life fleet by us in this vain attendance on the genius of the place and moment. It is thus that tracts of young fir,

and low rocks that reach into deep soundings, particularly torture and delight me. Something must have happened in such places, and perhaps ages back, to members of my race; and when I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots again seem to abide their destiny, suggestive and impenetrable, "miching mallecho." The inn at Burford Bridge, with its arbours and green garden and silent, eddying river — though it is known already as the place where Keats wrote some of his "Endymion" and Nelson parted from his Emma — still seems to wait the coming of the appropriate legend. Within these ivied walls, behind these old green shutters, some further business smoulders, waiting for its hour. The old Hawes Inn at the Queen's Ferry makes a similar call upon my fancy. There it stands, apart from the town, beside the pier, in a climate of its own, half inland, half marine — in front, the ferry bubbling with the tide and the guardship swinging to her anchor; behind, the old garden with the trees. Americans seek it already for the sake of Lovel and Oldbuck, who dined there at the beginning of the

"Antiquary." But you need not tell me — that is not all; there is some story, unrecorded or not yet complete, which must express the meaning of that inn more fully. So it is with names and faces; so it is with incidents that are idle and inconclusive in themselves, and yet seem like the beginning of some quaint romance, which the all careless author leaves untold. How many of these romances have we not seen determine at their birth; how many people have met us with a look of meaning in their eye, and sunk at once into trivial acquaintances; to how many places have we not drawn near, with express intimations — "here my destiny awaits me" — and we have but dined there and passed on! I have lived both at the Hawes and Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place; but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure and suspense, nothing befell me in either worth remark. The man or the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip upon the green shutters of the inn at Burford.¹

¹ Since the above was written I have tried to launch the boat with my own hands in "Kidnapped." Some day, perhaps, I may try a rattle at the shutters.

Now, this is one of the natural appetites with which any lively literature has to count. The desire for knowledge, I had almost added the desire for meat, is not more deeply seated than this demand for fit and striking incident. The dullest of clowns tells, or tries to tell, himself a story, as the feeblest of children uses invention in his play; and even as the imaginative grown person, joining in the game, at once enriches it with many delightful circumstances, the great creative writer shows us the realization and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream. The right kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow; and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in a tale answer one to another like notes in music. The threads of a story come from time to time together and make a picture in the web; the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration. Crusoe recoiling from the footprint, Achilles shouting over against the Trojans, Ulysses bending the great bow, Christian running with his fingers in his ears, these are each culminating

moments in the legend, and each has been printed on the mind's eye forever. Other things we may forget; we may forget the words, although they are beautiful; we may forget the author's comment, although perhaps it was ingenious and true; but these epoch-making scenes, which put the last mark of truth upon a story and fill up, at one blow, our capacity for sympathetic pleasure, we so adopt into the very bosom of our mind that neither time nor tide can efface or weaken the impression. This, then, is the plastic part of literature: to embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye. This is the highest and hardest thing to do in words; the thing which, once accomplished, equally delights the schoolboy and the sage, and makes, in its own right, the quality of epics. Compared with this, all other purposes in literature, except the purely lyrical or the purely philosophic, are bastard in nature, facile of execution, and feeble in result. It is one thing to write about the inn at Burford, or to describe scenery with the word-painters; it is quite another to seize on the heart of the suggestion and make a country famous with a legend. It is one thing to remark and to dissect, with the most cutting logic, the complications of life, and of the human spirit; it is quite another to give them body and blood in the story of Ajax or

of Hamlet. The first is literature, but the second is something besides, for it is likewise art.

English people of the present day¹ are apt, I know not why, to look some what down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate. It is thought clever to write a novel with no story at all, or at least with a very dull one. Reduced even to the lowest terms, a certain interest can be communicated by the art of narrative; a sense of human kinship stirred; and a kind of monotonous fitness, comparable to the words and air of "Sandy's Mull," preserved among the infinitesimal occurrences recorded. Some people work, in this manner, with even a strong touch. Mr. Trollope's inimitable clergymen naturally arise to the mind in this connection. But even Mr. Trollope does not confine himself to chronicling small beer. Mr. Crawley's collision with the Bishop's wife, Mr. Melnotte dallying in the deserted banquet-room, are typical incidents, especially conceived, fitly embodying a crisis. Or again look at Thackeray. If Rawdon Crawley's blow were not delivered, "Vanity Fair" would cease to be a work of art. That scene is the chief ganglion of the tale; and the discharge of energy from Rawdon's fist is the reward and consolation of the reader. The end

¹ 1882.

of "Esmond" is a yet wider excursion from the author's customary fields; the scene in Castlewood is pure Dumas; the great and wily English borrower has here borrowed from the great, unblushing French thief; as usual, he has borrowed admirably well, and the breaking of the sword rounds off the best of all his books with a manly, martial note. But perhaps nothing can more strongly illustrate the necessity for marking incident than to compare the living fame of "Robinson Crusoe" with the discredit of "Clarissa Harlowe." "Clarissa" is a book of a far more startling import, worked out, on a great canvas, with inimitable courage and unflagging art. It contains wit, character, passion, plot, conversations full of spirit and insight, letters sparkling with unstrained humanity; and if the death of the heroine be somewhat frigid and artificial, the last days of the hero strike the only note of what we now call Byronism, between the Elizabethans and Byron himself. And yet a little story of a shipwrecked sailor, with not a tenth part of the style nor a thousandth part of the wisdom, exploring none of the arcana of humanity and deprived of the perennial interest of love, goes on from edition to edition, ever young, while "Clarissa" lies upon the shelves unread. A friend of mine, a Welsh blacksmith, was twenty-five years old and could neither read nor write,

when he heard a chapter of "Robinson" read aloud in a farm kitchen. Up to that moment he had sat content, huddled in his ignorance, but he left that farm another man. There were day-dreams, it appeared, divine day-dreams, written and printed and bound, and to be bought for money and enjoyed at pleasure. Down he sat that day, painfully learned to read Welsh, and returned to borrow the book. It had been lost, nor could he find another copy but one that was in English. Down he sat once more, learned English, and at length, and with entire delight, read "Robinson." It is like the story of a love-chase. If he had heard a letter from "Clarissa," would he have been fired with the same chivalrous ardour? I wonder. Yet "Clarissa" has every quality that can be shown in prose, one alone excepted — pictorial or picture-making romance. While "Robinson" depends, for the most part and with the overwhelming majority of its readers, on the charm of circumstance.

In the highest achievements of the art of words, the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and romantic interest, rise and fall together by a common and organic law. Situation is animated with passion, passion clothed upon with situation. Neither exists for itself, but each inheres indissolubly with the other. This is high art; and not only the highest art possible in words, but the highest art of

all, since it combines the greatest mass and diversity of the elements of truth and pleasure. Such are epics, and the few prose tales that have the epic weight. But as from a school of works, aping the creative, incident and romance are ruthlessly discarded, so may character and drama be omitted or subordinated to romance. There is one book, for example, more generally loved than Shakespeare, that captivates in childhood, and still delights in age — I mean the "Arabian Nights" — where you shall look in vain for moral or for intellectual interest. No human face or voice greets us among that wooden crowd of kings and genies, sorcerers and beggar-men. Adventure on the most naked terms, furnishes forth the entertainment and is found enough. Dumas approaches perhaps nearest of any modern to these Arabian authors in the purely material charm of some of his romances. The early part of "Monte Cristo," down to the finding of the treasure, is a piece of perfect storytelling; the man never breathed who shared these moving incidents without a tremor, and yet Faria is a thing of packthread and Dantès little more than a name. The sequel is one long-drawn error, gloomy, bloody, unnatural and dull; but as for these early chapters, I do not believe there is another volume extant where you can breathe the same unmingled atmosphere of romance. It is

very thin and light, to be sure, as on a high mountain; but it is brisk and clear and sunny in proportion. I saw the other day, with envy, an old and a very clever lady setting forth on a second or third voyage into "Monte Cristo." Here are stories which powerfully affect the reader, which can be reperused at any age, and where the characters are no more than puppets. The bony fist of the showman visibly propels them; their springs are an open secret; their faces are of wood, their bellies filled with bran; and yet we thrillingly partake of their adventures. And the point may be illustrated still further. The last interview between Lucy and Richard Feveril is pure drama; more than that, it is the strongest scene, since Shakespeare, in the English tongue. Their first meeting by the river, on the other hand is pure romance; it has nothing to do with characters; it might happen to any other boy and maiden, and be none the less delightful for the change. And yet I think he would be a bold man who should choose between these passages. Thus, in the same book, we may have two scenes, each capital in its order; in the one, human passion, deep calling unto deep, shall utter its genuine voice; in the second, according circumstances, like instruments in tune, shall build up a trivial but desirable incident, such as we love to prefigure for ourselves; and in the end, in spite

of the critics, we may hesitate to give the preference to either. The one may ask more genius — I do not say it does; but at least the other dwells as clearly in the memory.

True romantic art, again, makes a romance of all things. It reaches into the highest abstraction of the ideal; it does not refuse the most pedestrian realism. "Robinson Crusoe" is as realistic as it is romantic; both qualities are pushed to an extreme, and neither suffers. Nor does romance depend upon the material importance of the incidents. To deal with strong and deadly elements, banditti, pirates, war and murder, is to conjure with great names, and, in the event of failure, to double the disgrace. The arrival of Haydn and Consuelo at the Canon's villa is a very trifling incident; yet we may read a dozen boisterous stories from beginning to end, and not receive so fresh and stirring an impression of adventure. It was the scene of Crusoe at the wreck, if I remember rightly, that so bewitched my blacksmith. Nor is the fact surprising. Every single article the castaway recovers from the hulk is "a joy forever" to the man who reads of them. They are the things that should be found, and the bare enumeration stirs the blood. I found a glimmer of the same interest the other day in a new book, "The Sailor's Sweetheart," by Mr. Clark Russell. The whole business of the

brig "Morning Star" is very rightly felt and spiritedly written; but the clothes, the books and the money satisfy the reader's mind like things to eat. We are dealing here with the old cut-and-dry, legitimate interest of treasure trove. But even treasure trove can be made dull.

There are few people who have not groaned under the plethora of goods that fell to the lot of the "Swiss Family Robinson," that dreary family. They found article after article, creature after creature, from milk kine to pieces of ordnance, a whole consignment; but no informing taste had presided over the selection, there was no smack or relish in the invoice; and these riches left the fancy cold. The box of goods in Verne's "Mysterious Island" is another case in point: there was no gusto and no glamour about that; it might have come from a shop. But the two hundred and seventy-eight Australian sovereigns on board the "Morning Star" fell upon me like a surprise that I had expected; whole vistas of secondary stories besides the one in hand, radiated forth from that discovery, as they radiate from a striking particular in life; and I was made for the moment as happy as a reader has the right to be.

To come at all at the nature of this quality of romance, we must bear in mind the peculiarity of our attitude to any art. No art produces illusion;

in the theatre we never forget that we are in the theatre; and while we read a story, we sit wavering between two minds, now merely clapping our hands at the merit of the performance, now condescending to take an active part in fancy with the characters. This last is the triumph of romantic story-telling: when the reader consciously plays at being the hero, the scene is a good scene. Now in character-studies the pleasure that we take is critical; we watch, we approve, we smile at incongruities, we are moved to sudden heats of sympathy with courage, suffering or virtue. But the characters are still themselves, they are not us; the more clearly they are depicted, the more widely do they stand away from us, the more imperiously do they thrust us back into our place as spectator. I cannot identify myself with Rawdon Crawley or with Eugene de Rastignac, for I have scarce a hope or fear in common with them. It is not character but incident that woos us out of our reserve. Something happens as we desire to have it happen to ourselves; some situation, that we have long dallied with in fancy, is realized in the story with enticing and appropriate details. Then we forget the characters; then we push the hero aside; then we plunge into the tale in our own person and bathe in fresh experience; and then, and then only, do we say we have been reading a romance. It

is not only pleasurable things that we imagine in our day-dreams; there are lights in which we are willing to contemplate even the idea of our own death; ways in which it seems as if it would amuse us to be cheated, wounded or calumniated.

It is thus possible to construct a story, even of tragic import, in which every incident, detail and trick of circumstance shall be welcome to the reader's thoughts. Fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child; it is there that he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life; and when the game so chimes with his fancy that he can join in it with all his heart, when it pleases him with every turn, when he loves to recall it and dwells upon its recollections with entire delight, fiction is called romance.

Walter Scott is out and away the king of the romantics. "The Lady of the Lake" has no indisputable claim to be a poem beyond the inherent fitness and desirability of the tale. It is just such a story as a man would make up for himself, walking, in the best health and temper, through just such scenes as it is laid in. Hence it is that a charm dwells undefinable among these slovenly verses, as the unseen cuckoo fills the mountains with his note; hence, even after we have flung the book aside, the scenery and adventures remain present to the mind, a new and green possession

not unworthy of that beautiful name, "The Lady of the Lake," or that direct, romantic opening — one of the most spirited and poetical in literature — "The stag at eve had drunk his fill." The same strength and the same weaknesses adorn and disfigure the novels. In that ill-written, ragged book, "The Pirate," the figure of Cleveland — cast up by the sea on the resounding foreland of Dunrossness — moving, with the blood on his hands and the Spanish words on his tongue, among the simple islanders — singing a serenade under the window of his Shetland mistress — is conceived in the very highest manner of romantic invention. The words of his song, "Through groves of palm," sung in such a scene and by such a lover, clinch, as in a nutshell, the emphatic contrast upon which the tale is built. In "Guy Mannering," again, every incident is delightful to the imagination; and the scene when Harry Bertram lands at Ellangowan is a model instance of romantic method.

"'I remember the tune well,' he says, 'though I cannot guess what should at present so strongly recall it to my memory.' He took his flageolet from his pocket and played a simple melody. Apparently the tune awoke the corresponding associations of a damsel. . . . She immediately took up the song —

“‘Are these the links of Forth, she said;
Or are they the crooks of Dee,
Or the bonny woods of Warroch Head
That I so fain would see?’

“‘By heaven!’ said Bertram, ‘it is the very ballad.’” On this quotation two remarks fall to be made. First, as an instance of modern feeling for romance, this famous touch of the flageolet and the old song is selected by Miss Braddon for omission. Miss Braddon’s idea of a story, like Mrs. Todgers’s idea of a wooden leg, were something strange to have expounded. As a matter of personal experience, Meg’s appearance to old Mr. Bertram on the road, the ruins of Dorncleugh, the scene of the flageolet, and the Dominic’s recognition of Harry, are the four strong notes that continue to ring in the mind after the book is laid aside. The second point is still more curious. The reader will observe a mark of excision in the passage as quoted by me. Well, here is how it runs in the original: “a damsel, who, close behind a fine spring about half-way down the descent, and which had once supplied the castle with water, was engaged in bleaching linen.” A man who gave in such copy would be discharged from the staff of a daily paper. Scott has forgotten to prepare the reader for the presence of the “damsel;” he has forgotten to mention the spring and its relation to the ruin; and now,

face to face with his omission, instead of trying back and starting fair, crams all this matter, tail foremost, into a single shambling sentence. It is not merely bad English, or bad style; it is abominably bad narrative besides.

Certainly the contrast is remarkable; and it is one that throws a strong light upon the subject of this paper. For here we have a man of the finest creative instinct touching with perfect certainty and charm the romantic junctures of his story; and we find him utterly careless, almost, it would seem, incapable, in the technical matter of style, and not only frequently weak, but frequently wrong in points of drama. In character parts, indeed, and particularly in the Scotch, he was delicate, strong and truthful; but the trite, obliterated features of too many of his heroes have already wearied two generations of readers. At times his characters will speak with something far beyond propriety with a true heroic note; but on the next page they will be wading wearily forward with an ungrammatical and undramatic rigmarole of words. The man who could conceive and write the character of Elspeth of the Craighburnfoot, as Scott has conceived and written it, had not only splendid romantic, but splendid tragic gifts. How comes it, then, that he could so often fob us off with languid, inarticulate twaddle?

It seems to me that the explanation is to be found in the very quality of his surprising merits. As his books are play to the reader, so were they play to him. He conjured up the romantic with delight, but he had hardly patience to describe it. He was a great day-dreamer, a seer of fit and beautiful and humourous visions, but hardly a great artist; hardly, in the manful sense, an artist at all. He pleased himself, and so he pleases us. Of the pleasures of his art he tasted fully; but of its toils and vigils and distresses never man knew less. A great romantic — an idle child.

— *Memories and Portraits.*

IN PRAISE OF BOOKS

RICHARD DE BURY

THAT the Treasure of Wisdom is chiefly contained in Books.

The desirable treasure of wisdom and science, which all men desire by an instinct of nature, infinitely surpasses all the riches of the world; in respect of which precious stones are worthless; in comparison with which silver is as clay and pure gold is as a little sand; at whose splendour the sun and moon are dark to look upon; compared with whose marvellous sweetness honey and manna are bitter to the taste. O value of wisdom that fadeth not away with time, virtue ever flourishing, that cleanseth its possessor from all venom! O heavenly gift of the divine bounty, descending from the Father of lights, that thou mayest exalt the rational soul to the very heavens! Thou art the celestial nourishment of the intellect, for which those who eat shall still hunger and those who drink shall still thirst, and the gladdening harmony of the languishing soul, which he that hears shall never be confounded. Thou art the moderator and rule of morals, which he that follows shall not sin. By thee kings

reign and princes decree justice. By thee, rid of their native rudeness, their minds and tongues being polished, the thorns of vice being torn up by the roots, those men attain high places of honour and become fathers of their country and companions of princes, who without thee would have melted their spears into pruning hooks and ploughshares, or would perhaps be feeding swine with the prodigal.

Where dost thou chiefly lie hidden, O most elect treasure! and where shall thirsting souls discover thee?

Certes, thou hast placed thy tabernacle in books, where the Most High, the Light of lights, the Book of Life, has established thee. There every one who asks receiveth thee, and every one who seeks finds thee, and to every one that knocketh boldly it is speedily opened. Therein the cherubim spread not their wings, that the intellect of the students may ascend and look from pole to pole, from the east and west from the north and from the south. Therein the mighty and incomprehensible God himself is apprehensibly contained and worshipped; therein is revealed the nature of things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal; therein are discerned the laws by which every state is administered, the offices of the celestial hierarchy are distinguished and the tyrannies of demons described, such as neither the ideas

of Plato transcend nor the chair of Crato contained. In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth; from books come forth the laws of peace. All things are corrupted and decay in time: Saturn ceases not to devour the children that he generates. All the glory of the world would be buried in oblivion, unless God had provided mortals with the remedy of books. Alexander, the conqueror of the earth, Julius the invader of Rome and of the world, who, the first in war and arts, assumed universal empire under his single rule, faithful Fabricius and stern Cato, would now have been unknown to fame, if the aid of books had been wanting. Towers have been razed to the ground; cities have been overthrown; triumphal arches have perished from decay; nor can either pope or king find any means of more easily conferring the privilege of perpetuity than by books. The book that he has made renders its author this service in return, that so long as the book survives its author remains immortal and cannot die, as Ptolemy declares in the Prologue to his *Almagest*: He is not dead, he says, who has given life to science.

Who therefore will limit by anything of another kind the price of the infinite treasure of books, from which the scribe who is instructed bringest forth

things new and old? Truth that triumphs over all things, which overcomes the king, wine, and women, which it is reckoned holy to honour before friendship, which is the way without turning and the life without end, which holy Boethius considers to be threefold in thought, speech, and writing, seems to remain more usefully and to fructify to greater profit in books. For the meaning of the voice perishes with the sound; truth latent in the mind is wisdom that is hid and treasure that is not seen; but truth which shines forth in books desires to manifest itself to every impressionable sense. It commends itself to the sight when it is read, to the hearing when it is heard, and moreover in a manner to the touch, when it suffers itself to be transcribed, bound, corrected, and preserved. The undisclosed truth of the mind, although it is the possession of the noble soul, yet because it lacks a companion, is not certainly known to be delightful, while neither sight nor hearing takes account of it. Further the truth of the voice is patent only to the ear and eludes the sight, which reveals to us more of the qualities of things, and linked with the subtlest emotions begins and perishes as it were in a breath. But the written truth of books, not transient but permanent, plainly offers itself to be observed, and by means of the pervious spherules of the eyes, passing through the vesti-

bule of perception and the courts of imagination, enters the chamber of intellect, taking its place in the couch of memory, where it engenders the eternal truth of the mind.

Finally, we must consider what pleasantness of teaching there is in books, how easy, how secret! How safely we lay bare the poverty of human ignorance to books without feeling any shame! They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money. If you come to them they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them, they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant. O books who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully! By how many thousand types are ye commended to learned men in the scriptures given us by inspiration of God! For ye are the minds of profoundest wisdom, to which the wise man sends his son that he may dig out treasures: Prov. 2. Ye are the wells of living waters, which father Abraham first digged, Isaac digged again, and which the Philistines strive to fill up: Gen. 26. Ye are indeed the most delightful ears of corn, full of grain, to be rubbed only by apostolic hands, that the sweetest food may be produced for hungry souls: Matt. 12. Ye are the golden pots in which

manna is stored, and rocks flowing with honey, nay combs of honey, most plenteous udders of the milk of life, garners ever full; ye are the tree of life and the fourfold river of Paradise, by which the human mind is nourished and the thirsty intellect is watered and refreshed. Ye are the ark of Noah and the ladder of Jacob, and the troughs by which the young of those who look therein are coloured; ye are the stones of testimony and the pitchers holding the lamps of Gideon, and scrip of David, from which the smoothest stones are taken for the slaying of Goliath. Ye are the golden vessels of the Temple, the arms of the soldiers of the Church, with which to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, fruitful olives, vines of Engadi, fig trees that are never barren, burning lamps always to be held in readiness — and all the noblest comparisons of scripture may be applied to books, if we choose to speak in figures. — *Philobiblon*.

— *Translated by Ernest Chester Thomas.*

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON BOOKS AND READING

CHARLES LAMB

"To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now I think a man of quality and breeding may be much amused with the natural sprouts of his own."

— *Lord Foppington, in The Relapse.*

An ingenious acquaintance of my own was so much struck with this bright sally of his Lordship, that he has left off reading altogether, to the great improvement of his originality. At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in other's speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a *book*. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of *books which are no books* — *biblia a-biblia* — I reckon Court Calendars, Direc-

tories, Pocket Books (the Literary excepted), Draught Boards bound and lettered at the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacks, Statutes at Large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without": the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's Moral Philosophy. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what "seem its leaves," to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay. To expect a Steele, or a Farquhar, and find — Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of blockheaded Encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of Russia, or Morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably reclothe my shivering folios; would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Lully to look like himself again in the world. I never see these impostors, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of Magazines, for instance, in a full suit. The *déshabille*, or half-binding (with Russia backs ever) is *our* costume. A Shakespeare, or a Milton (unless the first editions), it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's Seasons, again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "Circulating Library" Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the thousand thumbs, that have turned over their pages with delight! — of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or harder-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them

a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?

In some respects the better a book is, the less it demands from binding. Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and all that class of perpetually self-reproductive volumes — Great Nature's Stereotypes — we see them individually perish with less regret, because we know the copies of them to be "eternæ." But where a book is at once both good and rare — where the individual is almost the species, and when *that* perishes,

" We know not where is that Promethean torch
That can its light relumine " —

such a book, for instance, as the Life of the Duke of Newcastle, by his Duchess — no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.

Not only rare volumes of this description, which seem hopeless ever to be reprinted; but old editions of writers, such as Sir Philip Sydney, Bishop Taylor, Milton in his prose works, Fuller — of whom we *have* reprints, yet the books themselves, though they go about, and are talked of here and there, we know, have not endenized themselves (nor possibly ever will) in the national heart, so as to become stock books — it is good to possess these in durable and costly covers. I do not care for a First Folio Shakespeare. You cannot make a

pet book of an author whom everybody reads. I rather prefer the common editions of Rowe and Tonson, without notes, and with *plates*, which, being so execrably bad, serve as maps, or modest remembrancers, to the text; and without pretending to any supposable emulation with it, are so much better than the Shakespeare gallery *engravings*, which *did*. I have a community of feeling with my countrymen about his plays, and I like those editions of him best, which have been oftenest tumbled about and handled. — On the contrary, I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in Folio. The Octavo editions are painful to look at. I have no sympathy with them. If they were as much read as the current editions of the other poet, I should prefer them in that shape to the older one. I do not know a more heartless sight than the reprint of the Anatomy of Melancholy. What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion to modern censure? what hapless stationer could ever dream of Burton becoming popular? — The wretched Malone could not do worse, when he bribed the sexton of Stratford church to let him white-wash the painted effigy of old Shakespeare, which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, to the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eye-brow, hair, the very

dress he used to wear — the only authentic testimony we had, however imperfect, of these curious parts and parcels of him. They covered him over with a coat of white paint. By —, if I had been a justice of peace for Warwickshire, I would have clapped both commentator and sexton fast in the stocks, for a pair of meddling, sacrilegious varlets.

I think I see them at their work — these sapient trouble-tombs.

Shall I be thought fantastical, if I confess, that the names of some of our poets sound sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear — to mine, at least — than that of Milton or of Shakespeare? It may be, that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention, are, Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.

Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes, before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the *Faerie Queene* for a stop-gap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons?

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts and purged ears.

Winter evenings — the world shut out — with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At

such a season, the *Tempest*, or his own *Winter's Tale* —

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud — to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one — and it degenerates into an audience.

Books of quick interest, that hurry on for incidents, are for the eye to glide over only. It will not do to read them out. I could never listen to even the better kind of modern novels without extreme irksomeness.

A newspaper, read out, is intolerable. In some of the Bank offices it is the custom (To save so much individual time) for one of the clerks — who is the best scholar — to commence upon the *Times*, or the *Chronicle*, and recite its entire contents aloud *pro bono publico*. With every advantage of lungs and elocution, the effect is singularly vapid. In barbers' shops and public-houses a fellow will get up and spell out a paragraph, which he communicates as some discovery. Another fellow with *his* selection. So the entire journal transpires at length by piece-meal. Seldom readers are slow readers and, without this expedient, no one in the company would probably ever travel through the contents of a whole paper.

Newspapers always excite curiosity. No one ever lays one down without a feeling of disappointment.

What an eternal time that gentleman in black, at Nando's, keeps the paper! I am sick of hearing the waiter bawling out incessantly, "The Chronicle is in hand, sir."

As in these little diurnals I generally skip the Foreign News, the Debates and the Politics, I find the *Morning Herald* by far the most entertaining of them. It is an agreeable miscellany rather than a newspaper.

Coming in to an Inn at night — having ordered your supper — what can be more delightful than to find lying in the window-seat, left there time out of mind by the carelessness of some former guest — two or three numbers of the old Town and Country Magazine, with its amusing *tête-à-tête* pictures — "The Royal Lover and Lady G——;" "The Melting Platonic and the old Beau," — and such like antiquated scandal? Would you exchange it at that time, and in that place — for a better book?

Poor Tobin, who latterly fell blind, did not regret it so much for the weightier kinds of reading — the *Paradise Lost*, or *Comus*, he could have read to him — but he missed the pleasure of skimming over with his own eye a magazine or a light pamphlet.

I should not care to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, and reading *Candide*.

I do not remember a more whimsical surprise than having been once detected — by a familiar damsel — reclining at my ease upon the grass, on Primrose Hill (her Cythera), reading — *Pamela*. There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure; but as she seated herself down by me, and seemed determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been — any other book. We read on very sociably for a few pages; and, not finding the author much to her taste, she got up, and — went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture, whether the blush (for there was one between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in this dilemma. From me you shall never get the secret.

I am not much a friend to out-of-doors reading. I cannot settle my spirits to it. I knew a Unitarian minister, who was generally to be seen upon Snow Hill (as yet Skinner's Street *was not*), between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, studying a volume of Lardner. I own this to have been a strain of abstraction beyond my reach. I used to admire how he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter with a porter's knot, or a bread basket, would have quickly put to flight all the theology I am master of, and have left me worse than indifferent to the five points.

I was once amused — there is a pleasure in *affect-*

ing affectation — at the indignation of a crowd that was jostling in with me at the pit-door of Covent Garden Theatre, to have a sight of Master Betty — then at once in his dawn and his meridian — in *Hamlet*. I had been invited, quite unexpectedly, to join a party, whom I met near the door of the play-house, and I happened to have in my hand a large octavo of Johnson and Stevens's *Shakespeare*, which, the time not admitting of my carrying it home, of course went with me to the theatre. Just in the very heat and pressure of the doors opening — the *rush*, as they term it — I deliberately held the volume over my head, open at the scene in which the young Roscius had been most cried up, and quietly read by the lamp-light. The clamour became universal. "The affectation of the fellow," cried one. "Look at that gentleman *reading*, papa," squeaked a young lady, who, in her admiration of the novelty, almost forgot her fears. I read on. "He ought to have his book knocked out of his hand," exclaimed a pursy cit, whose arms were too fast pinioned to his side to suffer him to execute his kind intention. Still I read on — and, till the time came to pay my money, kept as unmoved as Saint Anthony at his holy offices, with the satyrs, apes, and hobgoblins moping and making mouths at him, in the picture, while the good man sits as undisturbed at the sight

as if he were the sole tenant of the desert. — The individual rabble (I recognized more than one of their ugly faces) had damned a slight piece of mine a few nights before, and I was determined the culprits should not a second time put me out of countenance.

There is a class of street-readers whom I can never contemplate without affection — the poor gentry, who, not having wherewithall to buy or hire a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls — the owner, with his hard eye, casting envious looks at them all the while, and thinking when they will have done. Venturing tenderly, page after page, expecting every moment when he shall interpose his interdict, and yet unable to deny themselves the gratification, they “snatch a fearful joy.” Martin B——, in this way, by daily fragments, got through two volumes of *Clarissa*, when the stall-keeper damped his laudable ambition, by asking him (it was in his younger days), whether he meant to purchase the work. M. declares that under no circumstances of his life did he ever peruse a book with half the satisfaction which he took in those uneasy snatches. A quaint poetess of our day has moralized upon this subject in two very touching but homely stanzas.

I saw a boy with eager eye
 Open a book upon a stall,
 And read as he'd devour it all;
 Which when the stall-man did espy,
 Soon to the boy I heard him call,
 " You, sir, you never buy a book,
 Therefore in one you shall not look."
 The boy pass'd slowly on, and with a sigh
 He wish'd he never had been taught to read,
 Then of the old churl's books he should have had no need.

Of sufferings the poor have many,
 Which never can the rich annoy:
 I soon perceived another boy,
 Who look'd as if he'd not had any
 Food, for that day at least — enjoy
 The sight of cold meat in a tavern larder,
 This boy's case, then thought I, is surely harder.
 Thus hungry, longing, thus without a penny,
 Beholding choice of dainty dressed-meat:
 No wonder if he wish he ne'er had learn'd to eat.

— *Last Essays of Elia.*

BOOKS

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

IT is easy to accuse books, and bad ones are easily found; and the best are but records, and not the things recorded; and certainly there is diletanteism enough, and books that are merely neutral and do nothing for us. In Plato's "Georgias," Socrates says: "The shipmaster walks in a modest garb near the sea, after bringing his passengers from Agina or from Pontus, not thinking he has done anything extraordinary, and certainly knowing that his passengers are the same, and in no respect better than when he took them on board." So it is with books, for the most part: they work no redemption in us. The bookseller might certainly know that his customers are in no respect better for the purchase and consumption of his wares. The volume is dear at a dollar, and after reading to weariness the lettered backs, we leave the shop with a sigh, and learn, as I did, without surprise, of a surly bank director, that in bank parlours they estimate all stocks of this kind as rubbish.

But it is not less true that there are books which

are of that importance in a man's private experience, as to verify for him the fables of Cornelius Agrippa, of Michael Scott, or of the old Orpheus of Thrace, — books which take rank in our life with parents and lovers and passionate experiences, so medicinal, so stringent, so revolutionary, so authoritative, — books which are the work and the proof of faculties so comprehensive, so nearly equal to the world which they paint, that, though one shuts them with meaner ones, he feels his exclusion from them to accuse his way of living.

Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written out in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age.

We owe to books those general benefits which come from high intellectual action. Thus, I think, we often owe to them perception of immortality. They impart sympathetic activity to the moral power. Go with mean people, and you think life is mean. Then read Plutarch, and the world is a proud place, peopled with men of positive

quality, with heroes and demigods standing around us, who will not let us sleep. Then, they address the imagination: only poetry inspires poetry. They become the organic culture of the time. College education is the reading of certain books which the common-sense of all scholars agrees will represent the science already accumulated. If you know that, — for instance in geometry, if you have read Euclid and Laplace, — your opinion has some value; if you do not know these, you are not entitled to give any opinion on the subject. Whenever any sceptic or bigot claims to be heard on the questions of intellect and morals, we ask if he is familiar with the books of Plato, where all his pert objections have once for all been disposed of. If not, he has no right to our time. Let him go and find himself answered there.

Meantime the colleges, whilst they provide us with libraries, furnish no professor of books; and, I think, no chair is so much wanted. In a library we are surrounded by many hundreds of dear friends, but they are imprisoned by an enchanter in these paper and leathern boxes; and though they know us, and have been waiting two, ten, or twenty centuries for us, — some of them, — and are eager to give us a sign, and unbosom themselves, it is the law of their limbo that they must not speak until spoken to; and as the enchanter has dressed

them, like battalions of infantry, in coat and jacket of one cut, by the thousand and ten thousand, your chance of hitting on the right one is to be computed by the arithmetical rule of Permutation and Combination, — not a choice out of three caskets, but out of half a million caskets all alike. But it happens in our experience, that in this lottery there are at least fifty or a hundred blanks to a prize. It seems, then, as if some charitable soul, after losing a great deal of time among the false books, and alighting upon a few true ones which made him happy and wise, would do a right act in naming those which have been bridges or ships to carry him safely over dark morasses and barren oceans, into the heart of sacred cities, into palaces and temples. This would be best done by those great masters of books who from time to time appear, — the Fabricii, the Seldens, Magliabecchis, Scaligers, Mirandolas, Bayles, Johnsons, whose eyes sweep the whole horizon of learning. But private readers, reading purely for love of the book, would serve us by leaving each the shortest note of what he found. There are books; and it is practicable to read them, because they are so few. We look over with a sigh the monumental libraries of Paris, of the Vatican, and the British Museum. In 1858, the number of printed books in the Imperial Library of Paris was estimated at eight hundred thousand

volumes, with an annual increase of twelve thousand volumes; so that the number of printed books extant to-day may easily exceed a million. It is easy to count the number of pages which a diligent man can read in a day, and the number of years which human life in favourable circumstances allows to reading; and to demonstrate that, though he should read from dawn till dark, for sixty years, he must die in the first alcoves. But nothing can be more deceptive than this arithmetic, where none but a natural method is really pertinent. I visit occasionally the Cambridge Library, and I can seldom go there without renewing the conviction that the best of it all is already within the four walls of my study at home. The inspection of the catalogue brings me continually back to the few standard writers who are on every private shelf; and to these it can afford only the most slight and casual additions. The crowds and centuries of books are only commentary and elucidation, echoes and weakeners of these few great voices of Time.

The best rule of reading will be a method from nature, and not a mechanical one of hours and pages. It holds each student to a pursuit of his native aim, instead of a desultory miscellany. Let him read what is proper to him, and not waste his memory on a crowd of mediocrities. As whole nations have derived their culture from a single book, — as the

Bible has been the literature as well as the religion of large portions of Europe, — as Hafiz was the eminent genius of the Persians, Confucius of the Chinese, Cervantes of the Spaniards; so, perhaps, the human mind would be a gainer, if all the secondary writers were lost, — say, in England, all but Shakespeare, Milton and Bacon, — through the profounder study so drawn to those wonderful minds. With this pilot of his own genius, let the student read one, or let him read many, he will read advantageously. Dr. Johnson said: "Whilst you stand deliberating which book your son shall read first, another boy has read both: read anything five hours a day, and you will soon be learned."

Nature is much our friend in this matter. Nature is always clarifying her water and her wine. No filtration can be so perfect. She does the same thing by books as by her gases and plants. There is always a selection in writers, and then a selection from the selection. In the first place, all books that get fairly into the vital air of the world were written by the successful class, by the affirming and advancing class, who utter what tens of thousands feel though they cannot say. There has already been a scrutiny and choice from many hundreds of young pens, before the pamphlet or political chapter which you read in a fugitive journal comes to your eye. All these are young adven-

turers, who produce their performance to the wise ear of Time, who sits and weighs, and, ten years hence, out of a million of pages reprints one. Again it is judged, it is winnowed by all the winds of opinion, and what terrific selection has not passed on it before it can be reprinted after twenty years, — and reprinted after a century! — it is as if Minos and Rhadamanthus had indorsed the writing. 'Tis therefore an economy of time to read old and famed books. Nothing can be preserved which is not good; and I know beforehand that Pindar, Martial, Terence, Galen, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Erasmus, More, will be superior to the average intellect. In contemporaries, it is not so easy to distinguish betwixt notoriety and fame.

Be sure, then, to read no mean books. Shun the spawn of the press on the gossip of the hour. Do not read what you shall learn, without asking, in the street and the train. Dr. Johnson said, "he always went into stately shops;" and good travellers stop at the best hotels; for, though they cost more, they do not cost much more, and there is the good company and the best information. In like manner, the scholar knows that the famed books contain, first and last, the best thoughts and facts. Now and then, by rarest luck, in some foolish Grub Street is the gem we want. But in the best circles is the best information. If you should

transfer the amount of your reading day by day from the newspapers to the standard authors— But who dare speak of such a thing?

The three practical rules, then, which I have to offer, are, — 1. Never read any book that is not a year old. 2. Never read any but famed books. 3. Never read any but what you like; or, in Shakespeare's phrase,

“No profit goes where is no pleasure ta'en:

In brief, sir, study what you most affect.”

Montaigne says, “Books are a languid pleasure”; but I find certain books vital and spermatic, not leaving the reader what he was; he shuts the book a richer man. I would never willingly read any others than such. And I will venture, at the risk of inditing a list of old primers and grammars, to count the few books which a superficial reader must thankfully use.

Of the old Greek books, I think there are five which we cannot spare: 1. Homer, who, in spite of Pope and all the learned uproar of centuries, has really the true fire, and is good for simple minds, is the true and adequate germ of Greece, and occupies that place as history which nothing can supply. It holds through all literature, that our best history is still poetry. It is so in Hebrew, in Sanscrit, and in Greek. English history is best known through Shakespeare; how much through Merlin,

Robin Hood, and the Scottish ballads! — the German, through the *Nibelungenlied*; the Spanish, through the *Cid*. Of Homer, George Chapman's is the heroic translation, though the most literal prose version is the best of all. 2. Herodotus, whose history contains inestimable anecdotes, which brought it with the learned into a sort of disesteem; but in these days, when it is found that what is most memorable of history is a few anecdotes, and that we need not be alarmed though we should find it not dull, it is regaining credit. 3. *Æschylus*, the grandest of the three tragedians, who has given us under a thin veil the first plantation of Europe. The "*Prometheus*" is a poem of the like dignity and scope as the Book of Job, of the Norse Edda. 4. Of Plato I hesitate to speak, lest there should be no end. You find in him that which you have already found in Homer, now ripened to thought, — the poet converted to a philosopher, with loftier strains of musical wisdom than Homer reached; as if Homer were the youth, and Plato the finished man; yet with no less security of bold and perfect song, when he cares to use it, and with some harp-strings fetched from a higher heaven. He contains the future, as he came out of the past. In Plato, you explore modern Europe in its causes and seed, — all that in thought, which the history of Europe embodies or has yet to embody. The well-informed

man finds himself anticipated. Plato is up with him too. Nothing has escaped him. Every new crop in the fertile harvest of reform, every fresh suggestion of modern humanity, is there. If the student wish to see both sides, and justice done to the man of the world, pitiless exposure of pedants, and the supremacy of truth and the religious sentiment, he shall be contented also. Why should not young men be educated on this book? It would suffice for the tuition of the race, — to test their understanding, and to express their reason. Here is that which is so attractive to all men, — the literature of aristocracy shall I call it? — the picture of the best persons, sentiments, and manners, by the first master, in the best times, — portraits of Pericles, Alcibiades, Crito, Prodicus, Protagoras, Anaxagoras, and Socrates, with the lovely background of the Athenian and suburban landscape. Or who can overestimate the images with which Plato has enriched the minds of men, and which pass like bullion in the currency of all nations? Read the "Phædo," the "Protagoras," the "Phædrus," the "Timæus," the "Republic," and the "Apology of Socrates." 5. Plutarch cannot be spared from the smallest library: first, because he is so readable, which is much; then, that he is so medicinal and invigorating. The lives of Cimon, Lycurgus, Alexander, Demosthenes, Phocion, Marcellus, and the

rest, are what history has of best. But this book has taken care of itself, and the opinion of the world is expressed in the innumerable cheap editions, which make it as accessible as a newspaper. But Plutarch's "Morals" is less known, and seldom reprinted. Yet such a reader as I am writing to can as ill spare it as the "Lives." He will read in it the essays "On the Dæmon of Socrates," "On Isis and Osiris," "On Progress and Virtue," "On Garrulity," "On Love," and thank anew the art of printing, and the cheerful domain of ancient thinking. Plutarch charms by the facility of his associations; so that it signifies little where you open his book, you find yourself at the Olympian tables. His memory is like the Isthmian games where all that was excellent in Greece was assembled, and you are stimulated and recruited by lyric verses, by philosophic sentiments, by the forms and behaviour of heroes, by the worship of the gods, and by the passing of fillets, parsley and laurel wreaths, chariots, armour, sacred cups, and utensils of sacrifice. An inestimable trilogy of ancient social pictures are the three "Banquets" respectively of Plato, Xenophon, and Plutarch. Plutarch's has the least approach to historical accuracy; but the meeting of the Seven Wise Masters is a charming portraiture of ancient manners and discourse, and is as clear as the voice of a fife, and entertaining as a

French novel. Xenophon's delineation of Athenian manners is an accessory to Plato, and supplies traits of Socrates; whilst Plato's has merits of every kind, — being a repertory of the wisdom of the ancients on the subject of love, — a picture of a feast of wits, not less descriptive than Aristophanes, — and, lastly, containing that ironical eulogy of Socrates which is the source from which all the portraits of that philosopher current in Europe have been drawn.

Of course a certain outline should be obtained of Greek history, in which the important moments and persons can be rightly set down; but the shortest is the best, and if one lacks stomach for Mr. Grote's voluminous annals, the old slight and popular summary of Goldsmith or of Gillies will serve. The valuable part is the age of Pericles and the next generation. And here we must read the "Clouds" of Aristophanes, and what more of that master we gain appetite for, to learn our way in the streets of Athens, and to know the tyranny of Aristophanes, requiring more genius and sometimes not less cruelty than belonged to the official commanders. Aristophanes is now very accessible, with much valuable commentary, through the labors of Mitchell and Cartwright. An excellent popular book is J. A. St. John's "Ancient Greece"; the "Life and Letters" of Niebuhr, even more than his Lec-

tures, furnish leading views; and Winkelman, a Greek born out of due time, has become essential to an intimate knowledge of the Attic genius. The secret of the recent histories in German and in English is the discovery, owed first to Wolff, and later to Boeckh, that the sincere Greek history of that period must be drawn from Demosthenes, especially from the business orations, and from the comic poets.

If we come down a little by natural steps from the master to the disciples, we have, six or seven centuries later, the Platonists, — who also cannot be skipped, — Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Synesius, Jamblichus. Of Jamblichus the emperor said, “that he was posterior to Plato in time, not in genius.” Of Plotinus, we have eulogies by Porphyry and Longinus, and the favour of the Emperor Gallienus, — indicating the respect he inspired among his contemporaries. If any one who had read with interest the “Isis and Osiris” of Plutarch should read then a chapter called “Providence,” by Synesius, translated into English by Thomas Taylor, he will find it one of the majestic remains of literature, and, like one walking in the noblest of temples, will conceive new gratitude to his fellow-men, and a new estimate of their nobility. The imaginative scholar will find few stimulants to his brain like these writers. He has entered the Elysian Fields;

and the grand and pleasing figures of gods and demons and demoniacal men, of the "azonic" and the "aquatic gods," demons with fulgid eyes, and all the rest of the Platonic rhetoric, exalted a little under the African sun, sail before his eyes. The acolyte has mounted the tripod over the cave at Delphi; his heart dances, his sight is quickened. These guides speak of the gods with such depths and with such pictorial details, as if they had been bodily present at the Olympian feasts. The reader of these books makes new acquaintance with his own mind; new regions of thought are opened. Jamblichus's "Life of Pythagoras" works more directly on the will than the others; since Pythagoras was eminently a practical person, the founder of a school of ascetics and socialists, a planter of colonies, and nowise a man of abstract studies alone.

The respectable and sometimes excellent translations of Bohn's Library have done for literature what railroads have done for internal intercourse. I do not hesitate to read all the books I have named, and all good books, in translations. What is really best in any book is translatable, — any real insight or broad human sentiment. Nay, I observe that, in our Bible, and other books of lofty moral tone, it seems easy and inevitable to render the rhythm and music of the original into phrases

of equal melody. The Italians have a fling at translators, — *i traditori traduttori*; but I thank them. I rarely read any Latin, Greek, German, Italian, sometimes not a French book in the original, which I can procure in a good version. I like to be beholden to the great metropolitan English speech, the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven. I should as soon think of swimming across Charles River when I wish to go to Boston, as of reading all my books in originals, when I may have them rendered for me in my mother-tongue.

For history there is great choice of ways to bring the student through early Rome. If he can read Livy, he has a good book; but one of the short English compends, some Goldsmith or Ferguson, should be used, that will place in the cycle the bright stars of Plutarch. The poet Horace is the eye of the Augustan age; Tacitus, the wisest of historians; and Martial will give him Roman manners — and some very bad ones — in the early days of the Empire: but Martial must be read, if read at all, in his own tongue. These will bring him to Gibbon, who will take him in charge, and convey him with abundant entertainment down — with notice of all remarkable objects on the way — through fourteen hundred years of time. He cannot spare Gibbon, with his vast reading — with such wit and continuity

of mind, that, though never profound, his book is one of the conveniences of civilization, like the new railroad from ocean to ocean, — and, I think will be sure to send the reader to his “Memoirs of Himself,” and the “Extracts from my Journal,” and “Abstracts of my Readings,” which will spur the laziest scholar to emulation of his prodigious performance.

Now having our idler safe down as far as the fall of Constantinople in 1453, he is in very good courses; for here are trusty hands waiting for him. The cardinal facts of European history are soon learned. There is Dante’s poem, to open the Italian Republics of the Middle Age; Dante’s “Vita Nuova,” to explain Dante and Beatrice; and Boccaccio’s “Life of Dante,” — a great man to describe a greater. To help us, perhaps a volume or two of M. Sismondi’s “Italian Republics” will be as good as the entire sixteen. When we come to Michel Angelo, his Sonnets and Letters must be read, with his Life by Vasari, or, in our day, by Herman Grimm. For the Church, and the Feudal Institutions, Mr. Hallam’s “Middle Ages” will furnish, if superficial, yet readable and conceivable outlines.

The “Life of the Emperor Charles V,” by the useful Robertson, is still the key of the following age. Ximenes, Columbus, Loyola, Luther, Erasmus,

Melanchthon, Francis I., Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and Henry IV. of France are his contemporaries. It is a time of seeds and expansions, whereof our recent civilization is the fruit.

If now the relations of England to European affairs bring him to British ground, he is arrived at the very moment when modern history takes new proportions. He can look back for the legends and mythology to the "Younger Edda" and the "Heimskringla" of Snorro Sturelson, to Mallet's "Northern Antiquities," to Ellis's "Metrical Romances," to Asser's "Life of Alfred" and Venerable Bede, and to the researches of Sharon Turner and Palgrave. Hume will serve him for an intelligent guide, and in the Elizabethan era he is at the richest period of the English mind, with the chief men of action and of thought which that nation has produced, and with a pregnant future before him. Here he has Shakespeare, Spencer, Sidney, Raleigh, Bacon, Chapman, Jonson, Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher, Herbert, Donne, Herrick; and Milton, Marvel, and Dryden, not long after.

In reading history, he is to prefer the history of individuals. He will not repent the time he gives to Bacon, — not if he read the "Advancement of Learning," the "Essays," the "Novum Organum," the "History of Henry VIII.," and then all the "Letters" (especially those to the Earl of Devon-

shire, explaining the Essex business), and all but his "Apophthegms."

The task is aided by the strong mutual light which these men shed on each other. Thus, the works of Ben Jonson are a sort of hoop to bind all these fine persons together, and to the land to which they belong. He has written verses to or on all his notable contemporaries; and what with so many occasional poems, and the portrait sketches in his "Discoveries," and the gossiping record of his opinions in his conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden, he has really illustrated the England of his time, if not to the same extent, yet much in the same way, as Walter Scott has celebrated the persons and places of Scotland. Walton, Chapman, Herrick, and Sir Henry Wotton write also to the times.

Among the best books are certain *Autobiographies*: as, St. Augustine's Confessions; Benvenuto Cellini's Life; Montaigne's Essays; Lord Herbert of Cherbury's Memoirs; Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz; Rousseau's Confessions; Linnæus's Diary; Gibbon's, Hume's, Franklin's, Burn's, Alfieri's, Goethe's, and Hayden's Autobiographies.

Another class of books closely allied to these, and of like interest, are those which may be called *Table-Talks*: of which the best are Saadi's Gulistan; Luther's Table-Talk; Aubrey's Lives; Spence's

Anecdotes; Seldon's Table-Talk; Boswell's Life of Johnson; Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe; Coleridge's Table-Talk; and Hazlitt's Life of Northcote.

There is a class whose value I should designate as *Favourites*: such as Froissart's Chronicles; Southey's Chronicle of the Cid; Cervantes; Sully's Memoirs; Rabelais; Montaigne; Izaak Walton; Evelyn; Sir Thomas Browne; Aubrey; Sterne; Horace Walpole; Lord Clarendon; Doctor Johnson; Burke, shedding floods of light on his times; Lamb; Landor; and De Quincey;—a list, of course, that may be easily swelled, as dependent on individual caprice. Many men are as tender and irritable as lovers in reference to these predilections. Indeed, a man's library is a sort of harem, and I observe that tender readers have a great prudence in showing their books to a stranger.

The annals of bibliography afford many examples of the delirious extent to which book-fancying can go, when the legitimate delight in a book is transferred to a rare edition or to a manuscript. This mania reached its height about the beginning of the present century. For an autograph of Shakespeare one hundred and fifty-five guineas were given. In May, 1812, the library of the Duke of Roxburgh was sold. The sale lasted forty-two days,—we abridge the story from Dibdin, —and among the many curi-

osities was a copy of Boccaccio published by Valdarfer, at Venice, in 1471; the only perfect copy of this edition. Among the distinguished company which attended the sale were the Duke of Devonshire, Earl Spencer, and the Duke of Marlborough, then Marquis of Blandford. The bid stood at five hundred guineas. "A thousand guineas," said Earl Spencer. "And ten," added the Marquis. You might hear a pin drop. All eyes were bent on the bidders. Now they talked apart, now ate a biscuit, now made a bet, but without the least thought of yielding one to the other. But to pass over some details, — the contest proceeded until the Marquis said, "Two thousand pounds." The Earl Spencer bethought him like a prudent general of useless bloodshed and waste of powder, and had paused a quarter of a minute, when Lord Althorp with long steps came to his side, as if to bring his father a fresh lance to renew the fight. Father and son whispered together, and Earl Spencer exclaimed, "Two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds!" An electric shock went through the assembly. "And ten," quietly added the Marquis. There ended the strife. Ere Evans let the hammer fall, he paused; the ivory instrument swept the air; the spectators stood dumb, when the hammer fell. The stroke of its fall sounded on the farthest shores of Italy. The tap of that hammer was heard in

the libraries of Rome, Milan, and Venice. Boccaccio stirred in his sleep of five hundred years, and M. Van Praet groped in vain among the royal alcoves in Paris, to detect a copy of the famed Valdarfer Boccaccio.

Another class I distinguish by the term *Vocabularies*. Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" is a book of great learning. To read it is like reading in a dictionary. 'Tis an inventory to remind us how many classes and species of facts exist, and, in observing into what strange and multiplex by-ways learning has strayed, to infer our opulence. Neither is a dictionary a bad book to read. There is no cant in it, no excess of explanation, and it is full of suggestion, — the raw material of possible poems and histories. Nothing is wanting but a little shuffling, sorting, ligature, and cartilage. Out of a hundred examples, Cornelius Agrippa "On the Vanity of Arts and Sciences" is a specimen of that scribatiuousness which grew to be the habit of the gluttonous readers of his time. Like the modern Germans, they read a literature while other mortals read a few books. They read voraciously, and must disburden themselves; so they take any general topic, as, Melancholy, or Praise of Science, or Praise of Folly, and write and quote without method or end. Now and then out of that affluence of their learning comes a fine sentence from Theophrastus,

or Seneca, or Boethius, but no high method, no inspiring efflux. But one cannot afford to read for a few sentences; they are good only as strings of suggestive words.

There is another class, more needful to the present age, because the currents of custom run now in another direction, and leave us dry on this side; — I mean the *Imaginative*. A right metaphysics should do justice to the co-ordinate powers of Imagination, Insight, Understanding, and Will. Poetry, with its aids of Mythology and Romance, must be well allowed for an imaginative creature. Men are ever lapsing into a beggarly habit, wherein everything that is not ciphering, that is, which does not serve the tyrannical animal, is hustled out of sight. Our orators and writers are of the same poverty, and, in this rag-fair, neither the Imagination, the great awakening power, nor the Morals, creative of genius and of Men, are addressed. But though orator and poet be of this hunger party, the capacities remain. We must have symbols. The child asks you for a story, and is thankful for the poorest. It is not poor to him, but radiant with meaning. The man asks for a novel, — that is, asks leave for a few hours to be a poet, and to paint things as they ought to be. The youth asks for a poem. The very dunces wish to go to the theatre. What private heavens can we not open by yielding to all the sug-

gestion of rich music! We must have idolatries, mythologies, — some swing and verge for the creative power lying coiled and cramped here, driving ardent natures to insanity and crime if it do not find vent. Without the great arts which speak to the sense of beauty, a man seems to me a poor, naked, shivering creature. These are his becoming draperies, which warm and adorn him. Whilst the prudential and economical tone of society starves the imagination, affronted Nature gets such indemnity as she may. The novel is that allowance and frolic the imagination finds. Everything else pins it down, and men flee for redress to Byron, Scott, Disraeli, Dumas, Sand, Balzac, Dickens, Thackeray, and Reade. Their education is neglected; but the circulating-library and the theatre, as well as the trout-fishing, the Notch Mountains, the Adirondack country, the tour to Mont Blanc, to the White Hills, and the Ghauts, make such amends as they can.

The imagination infuses a certain volatility and intoxication. It has a flute which sets the atoms of our frame in a dance, like planets; and, once so liberated, the whole man reeling drunk to the music, they never quite subside to their old stony state. But what is the imagination? Only an arm or weapon of the interior energy; only the precursor of the reason. And books that treat the old pedantries of the world, our times, places, professions,

customs, opinions, histories, with a certain freedom, and distribute things, not after the usages of America and Europe, but after the laws of right reason, and with as daring a freedom as we use in dreams, put us on our feet again, enable us to form an original judgment of our duties, and suggest new thoughts for to-morrow.

"Lucrezia Floriani," "Le Peche de M. Antoine," "Jeane," and "Consuelo," of George Sand, are great steps from the novel of one termination, which we all read twenty years ago. Yet how far off from life and manners and motives the novel still is! Life lies about us dumb; the day, as we know it, has not yet found a tongue. These stories are to the plots of real life what the figures in "La Belle Assemblée," which represent the fashion of the month, are to portraits. But the novel will find the way to our interiors one day, and will not always be the novel of costume merely. I do not think it inoperative now. So much novel-reading cannot leave the young men and maidens untouched; and doubtless it gives some ideal dignity to the day. The young study noble behaviour; and as the player in "Consuelo" insists that he and his colleagues on the boards have taught princes the fine etiquette and strokes of grace and dignity which they practise with so much effect in their villas and among their dependents, so I often see traces of

the Scotch or the French novel in the courtesy and brilliancy of young midshipmen, collegians, and clerks. Indeed, when one observes how ill and ugly people make their loves and quarrels, 'tis a pity they should not read novels a little more, to import the fine generousities, and the clear, firm conduct, which are as becoming in the unions and separations which love affects under shingle roofs as in palaces and among illustrious personages.

In novels the most serious questions are beginning to be discussed. What made the popularity of "Jane Eyre," but that a central question was answered in some sort? The question there answered in regard to a vicious marriage will always be treated according to the habit of the party. A person of commanding individualism will answer it as Rochester does, — as Cleopatra, as Milton, as George Sand do, — magnifying the exception into a rule, dwarfing the world into an exception. A person of less courage, that is, of less constitution, will answer as the heroine does, — giving way to fate, to conventionalism, to the actual state and doings of men and women.

For the most part, our novel-reading is a passion for results. We admire parks, and high-born beauties, and the homage of drawing-rooms, and parliaments. They make us sceptical, by giving prominence to wealth and social position.

I remember when some peering eyes of boys discovered that the oranges hanging on the boughs of an orange-tree in a gay piazza were tied to the twigs by thread. I fear 'tis so with the novelist's prosperities. Nature has a magic by which she fits the man to his fortunes, by making them the fruit of his character. But the novelist plucks this event here, and that fortune there, and ties them rashly to his figures, to tickle the fancy of his readers with a cloying success, or scare them with shocks of tragedy. And so, on the whole, 'tis a juggle. We are cheated into laughter or wonder by feats which only oddly combine acts that we do every day. There is no new element, no power, no furtherance. 'Tis only confectionery, not the raising of new corn. Great is the poverty of their inventions. *She was beautiful, and he fell in love.* Money, and killing, and the Wandering Jew, and persuading the lover that his mistress is betrothed to another, — these are the main-springs: new names, but no new qualities in the men and women. Hence the vain endeavour to keep any bit of this fairy gold, which has rolled like a brook through our hands. A thousand thoughts awoke; great rainbows seemed to span the sky, — a morning among the mountains; but we close the book, and not a ray remains in the memory of evening. But this passion for romance, and this disappointment, show how much

we need real elevations and pure poetry; that which shall show us, in morning and night, in stars and mountains, and in all the plight and circumstance of men, the analogons of our own thoughts, and a like impression made by a just book and by the face of Nature.

If our times are sterile in genius, we must cheer us with books of rich and believing men who had atmosphere and amplitude about them. Every good fable, every mythology, every biography from a religious age, every passage of love, and even philosophy and science, when they proceed from an intellectual integrity, and are not detached and critical, have the imaginative element. The Greek fables, the Persian history (Firdusi), the "Younger Edda" of the Scandinavians, the "Chronicle of the Cid," the poem of Dante, the Sonnets of Michel Angelo, the English drama of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ford, and even the prose of Bacon and Milton, — in our time, the Ode of Wordsworth, and the poems and the prose of Goethe, have this enlargement, and inspire hope and generous attempts.

There is no room left, — and yet I might as well not have begun as to leave out a class of books which are the best: I mean the Bibles of the world, or the sacred books of each nation, which express for each the supreme result of their experience. After

the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, which constitute the sacred books of Christendom, these are, the Desatir of the Persians, and the Zoroastrian Oracles; the Vedas and Laws of Menu; the Upanishads, the Vishnu Purana, the Bhagvat Geeta, of the Hindoos; the books of the Buddhists; the "Chinese Classic," of four books, containing the wisdom of Confucius and Mencius. Also such other books as have acquired a semi-canonical authority in the world, as expressing the highest sentiment and hope of nations. Such are the "Hermes Trismegistus," pretending to be Egyptian remains; the "Sentences" of Epictetus; of Marcus Antoninus; the "Vishnu Sarma" of the Hindoos; the "Gulistan" of Saadi; the "Imitation of Christ," of Thomas à Kempis; and the "Thoughts" of Pascal.

All these books are the majestic expressions of the universal conscience, and are more to our daily purpose than this year's almanac or this day's newspaper. But they are for the closet, and to be read on the bended knee. Their communications are not to be given or taken with the lips and the end of the tongue, but out of the glow of the cheek, and with the throbbing heart. Friendship should give and take, solitude and time brood and ripen, heroes absorb and enact them. They are not to be held by letters printed on a page, but are living characters translatable into every tongue and form

of life. I read them on lichens and bark; I watch them on waves on the beach; they fly in birds, they creep in worms; I detect them in laughter and blushes and eye-sparkles of men and women. These are Scriptures which the missionary might well carry over prairie, desert, and ocean, to Siberia, Japan, Timbuctoo. Yet he will find that the spirit which is in them journeys faster than he, and greets him on his arrival, — was there already long before him. The missionary must be carried by it, and find it there, or he goes in vain. Is there any geography in these things? We call them Asiatic, we call them primeval; but perhaps that is only optical; for Nature is always equal to herself, and there are as good eyes and ears now in the planet as ever were. Only these ejaculations of the soul are uttered one or a few at a time, at long intervals, and it takes millenniums to make a Bible.

These are a few books of the books which the old and the later times have yielded us, which will reward the time spent on them. In comparing the number of good books with the shortness of life, many might well be read by proxy, if we had good proxies; and it would be well for sincere young men to borrow a hint from the French Institute and the British Association, and, as they divide the whole body into sections, each of which sits upon and reports of certain matters confided to it,

so let each scholar associate himself to such persons as he can rely on, in a literary club, in which each shall undertake a single work or series for which he is qualified. For example, how attractive is the whole literature of the "Roman de la Rose," the "Fabliaux," and the *gaie science* of the French Troubadours! Yet who in Boston has time for that? But one of our company shall undertake it, shall study and master it, and shall report on it, as under oath; shall give us the sincere result as it lies in his mind, adding nothing, keeping nothing back. Another member, meantime, shall as honestly search, sift, and as truly report, on British mythology, the Round Table, the histories of Brut, Merlin, and Welsh poetry; a third on the Saxon Chronicles, Robert of Gloucester, and William of Malmesbury; a fourth, on Mysteries, Early Drama, "*Gesta Romanorum*," Collier, and Dyce, and the Camden Society. Each shall give us his grains of gold, after the washing; and every other shall then decide whether this is a book indispensable to him also. — *Books, Art, etc.*

READING

HENRY D. THOREAU

WITH a little more deliberation in the choice of their pursuits, all men would perhaps become essentially students and observers for certainly their nature and destiny are interesting to all alike. In accumulating property for ourselves or our posterity, in founding a family or a state, or acquiring fame even, we are mortal; but in dealing with truth we are immortal, and need fear no change nor accident. The oldest Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the veil from the statue of the divinity; and still the trembling robe remains raised, and I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did, since it was I in him that was then so bold, and it is he in me that now reviews the vision. No dust has settled on that robe; no time has elapsed since that divinity was revealed. That time which we really improve, or which is improvable, is neither past, present, nor future.

My residence was more favourable, not only to thought, but to serious reading, than a university; and though I was beyond the range of the ordinary circulating library, I had more than ever come

within the influence of those books which circulate round the world, whose sentences were first written on bark, and are now merely copied from time to time on to linen paper. Says the poet Mir Camar Uddin Mast, "Being seated to run through the region of the spiritual world; I have had this advantage in books. To be intoxicated by a single glass of wine; I have experienced this pleasure when I have drunk the liquor of the esoteric doctrines." I kept Homer's *Iliad* on my table through the summer, though I looked at his page only now and then. Incessant labour with my hands, at first, for I had my house to finish and my beans to hoe at the same time, made more study impossible. Yet I sustained myself by the prospect of such reading in future. I read one or two shallow books of travel in the intervals of my work, till that employment made me ashamed of myself, and I asked where it was then that *I* lived.

The student may read Homer or Æschylus in the Greek without danger of dissipation or luxuriousness, for it implies that he in some measure emulates their heroes, and consecrates morning hours to their pages. The heroic books, even if printed in character of our mother tongue, will always be in a language dead to degenerate times; and we must laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than common

use permits out of what wisdom and valour and generosity we have. The modern cheap and fertile press, with all its translations, has done little to bring us nearer to the heroic writers of antiquity. They seem as solitary, and the letter in which they are printed as rare and curious, as ever. It is worth the expense of youthful days and costly hours, if you learn only some words of an ancient language, which are raised out of the trivialness of the street, to be perpetual suggestions and provocations. It is not in vain that the farmer remembers and repeats the few Latin words which he has heard. Men sometimes speak as if the study of the classics would at length make way for more modern and practical studies; but the adventurous student will always study classics, in whatever language they may be written and however ancient they may be. For what are the classics but the noblest recorded thoughts of man? They are the only oracles which are not decayed, and there are such answers to the most modern inquiry in them as Delphi and Dodona never gave. We might as well omit to study Nature because she is old. To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention

almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written. It is not enough even to be able to speak the language of that nation by which they are written, for there is a memorable interval between the spoken and the written language, the language heard and the language read. The one is commonly transitory, a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish, and we learn it unconsciously, like the brutes, of our mothers. The other is the maturity and experience of that; if that is our mother tongue, this is our father tongue, a reserved and select expression, too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak. The crowds of men who merely *spoke* the Greek and Latin tongues in the middle ages were not entitled by the accident of birth to *read* the works of genius written in those languages; for these were not written in that Greek or Latin which they knew, but in the select language of literature. They had not learned the nobler dialects of Greece and Rome, but the very materials on which they were written were waste paper to them, and they prized instead a cheap contemporary literature. But when the several nations of Europe had acquired distinct though rude written languages of their own, sufficient for the purposes of their rising literatures, then first learning re-

vived, and scholars were enabled to discern from that remoteness the treasures of antiquity. What the Roman and Grecian multitude could not *hear*, after the lapse of ages a few scholars *read*, and a few scholars only are still reading it.

However much we may admire the orator's occasional bursts of eloquence, the noblest written words are commonly as far behind or above the fleeting spoken language as the firmament with its stars is behind the clouds. *There* are the stars, and those who can may read them. The astronomers forever comment on and observe them. They are not exhalations like our daily colloquies and vaporous breath. What is called eloquence in the forum is commonly found to be rhetoric in the study. The orator yields to the inspiration of the transient occasion, and speaks to the mob before him, to those who can *hear* him; but the writer, whose more equable life is his occasion, and who would be distracted by the event and the crowd which inspire the orator, speaks to the intellect and heart of mankind, to all in any age who can *understand* him.

No wonder that Alexander carried the Iliad with him on his expeditions in a precious casket. A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work

of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips; — not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself. The symbol of an ancient man's thought becomes a modern man's speech. Two thousand summers have imparted to the monuments of Grecian literature, as to her marbles, only a maturer golden and autumnal tint, for they have carried their own serene and celestial atmosphere into all lands to protect them against the corrosion of time. Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations. Books, the oldest and the best, stand naturally and rightfully on the shelves of every cottage. They have no cause of their own to plead, but while they enlighten and sustain the reader his common sense will not refuse them. Their authors are a natural and irresistible aristocracy in every society, and, more than kings or emperors, exert an influence on mankind. When the illiterate and perhaps scornful trader has earned by enterprise and industry his coveted leisure and independence, and is admitted to the circles of wealth and fashion, he turns inevitably at last to those still higher but yet inaccessible circles of intellect and genius, and is sensible only of the imperfection of his culture and the vanity and insuffi-

ciency of all his riches, and further proves his good sense by the pains which he takes to secure for his children that intellectual culture whose want he so keenly feels; and thus it is that he becomes the founder of a family.

Those who have not learned to read the ancient classics in the language in which they were written must have a very imperfect knowledge of the history of the human race; for it is remarkable that no transcript of them has ever been made into any modern tongue, unless our civilization itself may be regarded as such a transcript. Homer has never yet been printed in English, nor Æschylus, nor Virgil even, — works as refined, as solidly done, and as beautiful almost as the morning itself; for later writers, say what we will of their genius, have rarely, if ever, equalled the elaborate beauty and finish and the lifelong and heroic literary labours of the ancients. They only talk of forgetting them who never knew them. It will be soon enough to forget them when we have the learning and the genius which will enable us to attend to and appreciate them. That age will be rich indeed when those relics which we call Classics, and the still older and more than classic but even less known Scriptures of the nations, shall have still further accumulated, when the Vaticans shall be filled with Vedas and Zendavestas and Bibles, with Homers

and Dantes and Shakespeares, and all the centuries to come shall have successively deposited their trophies in the forum of the world. By such a pile we may hope to scale heaven at last.

The works of the great poets have never yet been read by mankind, for only great poets can read them. They have only been read as the multitude read the stars, at most astrologically, not astronomically. Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing; yet this only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tip-toe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to.

I think that having learned our letters we should read the best that is in literature, and not be forever repeating our a b abs, and words of one syllable, in the fourth or fifth classes, sitting on the lowest and foremost form all our lives. Most men are satisfied if they read or hear read, and perchance have been convicted by the wisdom of one good book, the Bible, and for the rest of their lives vegetate and dissipate their faculties in what is called easy reading. There is a work in several volumes in our Circulating Library entitled Little Reading,

which I thought referred to a town of that name which I had not been to. There are those who, like cormorants and ostriches, can digest all sorts of this, even after the fullest dinner of meats and vegetables, for they suffer nothing to be wasted. If others are the machines to provide this provender, they are the machines to read it. They read the nine thousandth tale about Zebulon and Sephronia, and how they loved as none had ever loved before, and neither did the course of their true love run smooth, — at any rate, how it did run and stumble, and get up again and go on! how some poor unfortunate got up on to a steeple, who had better never gone up as far as the belfry; and then, having needlessly got him up there, the happy novelist rings the bell for all the world to come together and hear, O dear! how he did get down again! For my part, I think that they had better metamorphose all such aspiring heroes of universal noveldom into man weather-cocks, as they used to put heroes among the constellations, and let them swing round there till they are rusty, and not come down at all to bother honest men with their pranks. The next time the novelist rings the bell I will not stir though the meeting-house burn down. "The Skip of the Tip-Toe-Hop, a Romance of the Middle Ages, by the celebrated author of 'Tittle-Tol-Tan,' to appear in monthly parts; a great rush; don't all come

together." All this they read with saucer eyes, and erect and primitive curiosity, and with unwearied gizzard, whose corrugations even yet need no sharpening, just as some little four-year-old bencher his two-cent gilt-covered edition of Cinderella, — without any improvement, that I can see, in the pronunciation, or accent, or emphasis, or any more skill in extracting or inserting the moral. The result is in dullness of sight, a stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties. This sort of gingerbread is baked daily and more sedulously than pure wheat or rye-and-Indian in almost every oven, and finds a surer market.

The best books are not read even by those who are called good readers. What does our Concord culture amount to? There is in this town, with a very few exceptions, no taste for the best or for very good books even in English literature, whose words all can read and spell. Even the college-bred and so-called liberally educated men here and elsewhere have really little or no acquaintance with the English classics; and as for the recorded wisdom of mankind, the ancient classics and Bibles which are accessible to all who would know of them, there are the feeblest efforts anywhere made to become acquainted with them. I know a woodchopper, of middle age, who takes a French paper, not for

the news as he says, for he is above that, but to "keep himself in practise," he being a Canadian by birth; and when I ask him what he considers the best thing he can do in this world, he says, besides this, to keep up and add to his English. This is about as much as the college-bred generally do or aspire to do, and they take an English paper for the purpose. One who has just come from reading perhaps one of the best English books will find how many with whom he can converse about it? Or suppose he comes from reading a Greek or Latin classic in the original, whose praises are familiar even to the so-called illiterate; he will find nobody at all to speak to, but must keep silence about it. Indeed, there is hardly the professor in our colleges, who, if he has mastered the difficulties of the language, has proportionally mastered the difficulties of the wit and poetry of a Greek poet, and has any sympathy to impart to the alert and heroic reader; and as for the sacred Scriptures, or Bibles of mankind, who in this town can tell me even their titles? Most men do not know that any nation but the Hebrews have had a scripture. A man, any man, will go considerably out of his way to pick up a silver dollar; but here are golden words, which the wisest men of antiquity have uttered, and whose worth the wise of every succeeding age have assured us of; — and yet we learn to read only as far as Easy Reading, the

primers and class-books, and then we leave school. The "Little Reading," and story books, which are for boys and beginners; and our reading, our conversation, and thinking, are all on a very low level, worthy only of pygmies and manikins.

I aspire to be acquainted with wiser men than this our Concord soil has produced, whose names are hardly known here. Or shall I hear the name of Plato and never read his book? As if Plato were my townsman and I never saw him, — my next neighbour and I never heard him speak or attended to the wisdom of his words. But how actually is it? His Dialogues, which contain what was immortal in him, lie on the next shelf, and yet I never read them. We are under-bred and low-lived and illiterate; and in this respect I confess I do not make any very broad distinction between the illiterateness of my own townsman who cannot read at all and the illiterateness of him who has learned to read only what is for children and feeble intellects. We should be as good as the worthies of antiquity, but partly by first knowing how good they were. We are a race of tit-men, and soar but a little higher in our intellectual flights than the columns of the daily paper.

It is not all books that are as dull as their readers. There are probably words addressed to our condition exactly, which, if we could really hear and

understand, would be more salutary than the morning or the spring to our lives, and possibly put a new aspect on the face of things for us. How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book. The book exists for us perchance which will explain our miracles and reveal new ones. The at present unutterable things we may find somewhere uttered. These same questions that disturb and puzzle and confound us have in their turn occurred to all wise men; not one has been omitted; and each has answered them, according to his ability, by his words and his life. Moreover, with wisdom we shall learn liberality. The solitary hired man on a farm in the outskirts of Concord, who has had his second birth and peculiar religious experience, and is driven as he believes into silent gravity and exclusiveness by his faith, may think it is not true; but Zoroaster, thousands of years ago, travelled the same road and had the same experience; but he, being wise, knew it to be universal, and treated his neighbours accordingly, and is even said to have invented and established worship among them. Let him humbly commune with Zoroaster then, and through the liberalizing influence of all the worthies, with Jesus Christ himself, and let "our church" go by the board.

We boast that we belong to the nineteenth century and are making the most rapid strides of any

nation. But consider how little this village does for its own culture. I do not wish to flatter my townsmen, nor to be flattered by them, for that will not advance either of us. We need to be provoked, — goaded like oxen, as we are, into a trot. We have a comparatively decent system of common schools, schools for infants only; but excepting the half-starved Lyceum in the winter, and latterly the puny beginning of a library suggested by the State, no school for ourselves. We spend more on almost any article of bodily aliment or ailment than on our mental ailment. It is time we had uncommon schools, that we did not leave off our education when we begin to be men and women. It is time that villages were universities, and their elder inhabitants the fellows of universities, with leisure — if they are indeed so well off — to pursue liberal studies the rest of their lives. Shall the world be confined to one Paris or one Oxford forever? Cannot students be boarded here and get a liberal education under the skies of Concord? Can we not hire some Abelard to lecture to us? Alas! what with foddering the cattle and tending the store, we are kept from school too long, and our education is sadly neglected. In this country, the village should in some respects take the place of the nobleman of Europe. It should be the patron of the fine arts. It is rich enough. It wants only the

magnanimity and refinement. It can spend money enough on such things as farmers and traders value, but it is thought Utopian to propose spending money for things which more intelligent men know to be of far more worth. This town has spent seventeen thousand dollars on a town-house, thank fortune or politics, but probably it will not spend so much on living wit, the true meat to put into that shell, in a hundred years. The one hundred and twenty-five dollars annually subscribed for the Lyceum in the winter is better spent than any other equal sum raised in the town. If we live in the nineteenth century, why should we not enjoy the advantages which the nineteenth century offers? Why should our life be in any respect provincial? If we will read newspapers, why not skip the gossip of Boston and take the best newspaper in the world at once? — not be sucking the pap of “neutral family” papers, or browsing “Olive-Branches,” here in New England. Let the reports of all the learned societies come to us, and we will see if they know anything. Why should we leave it to Harper & Brothers and Redding & Co. to select our reading? As the nobleman of cultivated taste surrounds himself with whatever conduces to his culture, — genius — learning — wit — books — paintings — statuary — music — philosophical instruments, and the like; so let the village do, — not stop short at a

pedagogue, a parson, a sexton, a parish library, and three selectmen, because our pilgrim forefather got through a cold winter once on a bleak rock with these. To act collectively is according to the spirit of our institutions; and I am confident that, as our circumstances are more flourishing, our means are greater than the nobleman's. New England can hire all the wise men in the world to come and teach her, and board them round the while and not be provincial at all. That is the *uncommon* school we want. Instead of noblemen, let us have noble villages of men. If it is necessary, omit one bridge over the river, go round a little there, and throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us. — *Walden*.

RAGGED VETERANS

GEORGE GISSING

As often as I survey my bookshelves I am reminded of Lamb's "ragged veterans." Not that all my volumes came from the second-hand stall; many of them were neat enough in new covers, some were even stately in fragrant bindings, when they passed into my hands. But so often have I removed, so rough has been the treatment of my little library at each change of place, and, to tell the truth, so little care have I given to its well-being at normal times (for in all practical matters I am idle and inept), that even the comeliest of my books show the results of unfair usage. More than one has been foully injured by a great nail driven into a packing-case — this but the extreme instance of the wrongs they have undergone. Now that I have leisure and peace of mind, I find myself growing more careful — an illustration of the great truth that virtue is made easy by circumstance. But I confess that, so long as a volume holds together, I am not much troubled as to its outer appearance.

I know men who say they had as lief read any book in a library copy as in one from their own

shelf. To me that is unintelligible. For one thing, I know every book of mine by its *scent*, and I have but to put my nose between the pages to be reminded of all sorts of things. My Gibbon, for example, my well-bound eight-volume Milman edition, which I have read and read and read again for more than thirty years — never do I open it but the scent of the noble page restores to me all the exultant happiness of that moment when I received it as a prize. Or my Shakespeare, the great Cambridge Shakespeare — it has an odour which carries me yet further back in life; for these volumes belonged to my father, and before I was old enough to read them with understanding, it was often permitted me, as a treat, to take down one of them from the book-case, and reverently to turn the leaves. The volumes smell exactly as they did in that old time, and what a strange tenderness comes upon me when I hold one of them in hand. For that reason I do not often read Shakespeare in this edition. My eyes being good as ever, I take the Globe volume, which I bought in days when such a purchase was something more than an extravagance; wherefore I regard the book with that peculiar affection which results from sacrifice.

Sacrifice—in no drawing-room sense of the word. Dozens of my books were purchased with money which ought to have been spent upon what are

called the necessities of life. Many a time I have stood before a stall, or a bookseller's window, torn by conflict of intellectual desire and bodily need. At the very hour of dinner, when my stomach clamoured for food, I have been stopped by sight of a volume so long coveted, and marked at so advantageous a price, that I *could* not let it go; yet to buy it meant pangs of famine. My Heyne's *Tibullus* was grasped at such a moment. It lay on the stall of the old book-shop in Goodge Street — a stall where now and then one found an excellent thing among quantities of rubbish. Sixpence was the price — sixpence! At that time I used to eat my mid-day meal (of course my dinner) at a coffee-shop in Oxford Street, one of the real old coffee-shops, such as now, I suppose, can hardly be found. Sixpence was all I had — yes, all I had in the world; it would purchase a plate of meat and vegetables. But I did not dare to hope that the *Tibullus* would wait until the morrow, when a certain small sum fell due me. I paced the pavement, fingering the coppers in my pocket, eying the stall, two appetites at combat within me. The book was bought and I went home with it, and as I made a dinner of bread and butter I gloated over the pages.

In this *Tibullus* I found pencilled on the last page: "Perlegi, Oct. 4, 1792." Who was that possessor of the book, nearly a hundred years ago?

There was no other inscription. I like to imagine some poor scholar, poor and eager as I myself, who bought the volume with drops of his blood, and enjoyed the reading of it even as I did. How much *that* was I could not easily say. Gentle-hearted Tibullus! — of whom there remains to us a poet's portrait more delightful, I think, than anything of the kind in Roman literature.

An tacitum silvas inter reptare salubres,
Curantem quidquid dignum sapiente bonoque est?

So with many another book on the thronged shelves. To take them down is to recall, how vividly, a struggle and a triumph. In those days money represented nothing to me, nothing I cared to think about, but the acquisition of books. There were books of which I had passionate need, books more necessary to me than bodily nourishment. I could see them of course, at the British Museum, but that was not at all the same thing as having and holding them, my own property, on my own shelf. Now and then I have bought a volume of the raggedest and wretchedest aspect, dishonoured with foolish scribbling, torn, blotted — no matter, I liked better to read out of that than out of a copy that was not mine. But I was guilty at times of mere self-indulgence; a book tempted me, a book which was not one of those for which I really craved, a luxury

which prudence might bid me forego. As, for instance, my *Jung-Stilling*. It caught my eye in Holywell Street; the name was familiar to me in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and curiosity grew as I glanced over the pages. But that day I resisted; in truth I could not afford the eighteen-pence, which means that just then I was poor indeed. Twice again did I pass, each time assuring myself that *Jung-Stilling* had found no purchaser. There came a day when I was in funds. I see myself hastening to Holywell Street (in those days my habitual pace was five miles an hour). I see the little grey old man with whom I transacted my business — what was his name? — the bookseller who had been, I believe, a Catholic priest, and still had a certain priestly dignity about him. He took the volume, opened it, mused for a moment, then, with a glance at me, said, as if thinking aloud: "Yes, I wish I had time to read it."

Sometimes I added the labour of a porter to my fasting endured for the sake of books. At the little shop near the Portland Road Station I came upon a first edition of Gibbon, the price an absurdity — I think it was a shilling a volume. To possess those clean-paged quartos I would have sold my coat. As it happened, I had not enough money with me, but sufficient at home. I was living at Islington. Having spoken with the bookseller, I walked home,

took the cash, walked back again, and — carried the tomes from the west end of Euston Road to a street in Islington far beyond the *Angel*. I did it in two journeys — this being the only time in my life when I thought of Gibbon in *avoirdupois*. Twice — three times, reckoning the walk for the money — did I descend Euston Road and climb Pentonville on that occasion. Of the season and the weather I have no recollection; my joy in the purchase I had made drove out every other thought. Except, indeed, of the weight. I had infinite energy, but not much muscular strength, and the end of the last journey saw me upon a chair, perspiring, flaccid, aching — exultant!

The well-to-do person would hear this story with astonishment. Why did I not get the bookseller to send me the volumes? Or, if I could not wait, was there no omnibus along that London highway? How could I make the well-to-do person understand that I did not feel able to afford, that day, one penny more than I had spent on the book? No, no, such labour-saving expenditure did not come within my scope; whatever I enjoyed I earned it, literally, by the sweat of my brow. In those days I hardly knew what it was to travel by omnibus. I have walked London streets for twelve and fifteen hours together without ever a thought of saving my legs, or my time, by paying for waftage.

Being poor as poor can be, there were certain things I had to renounce, and this was one of them.

Years after, I sold my first edition of Gibbon for even less than it cost me; it went with a great many other fine books in folio and quarto, which I could not drag about with me in my constant removals; the man who bought them spoke of them as "tomb-stones." Why has Gibbon no market value? Often has my heart ached with regret for those quartos. The joy of reading the *Decline and Fall* in that fine type! The page was appropriate to the dignity of the subject; the mere sight of it tuned one's mind. I suppose I could easily get another copy now; but it would not be to me what that other was, with its memory of dust and toil. — *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.*

SUBTLETIES OF BOOK BUYERS

HENRY WARD BEECHER

NOTHING marks the increasing wealth of our times and the growth of the public mind toward refinement, more than the demand for books. Within ten years the sale of common books has increased probably two hundred per cent, and it is daily increasing. But the sale of expensive works, and of library-*editions* of standard authors in costly bindings, is yet more noticeable. Ten years ago, such a display of magnificent works, as is to be found at the Appletons' would have been a precursor of bankruptcy. There was no demand for them. A few dozen, in one little show-case, was the prudent whole. Now, one whole side of an immense store is not only filled with most admirably bound library-books, but from some inexhaustible source the void continually made in the shelves is at once refilled. A reserve of heroic books supply the places of those that fall. Alas! Where is human nature so weak as in the book-store! Speak of the appetite for drink; or of a *bon-vivant's* relish for a dinner! What are these mere animal throes and ragings compared with

those fantasies of taste, of those yearnings of the imagination, of those insatiable appetites of intellect, which bewilder a student in a great bookseller's temptation-hall?

How easily one may distinguish a genuine lover of books from the worldly man! With what subdued and yet glowing enthusiasm does he gaze upon the costly front of a thousand embattled volumes! How gently he draws them down, as if they were little children; how tenderly he handles them! He peers at the title-page, at the text, or the notes, with the nicety of a bird examining a flower. He studies the binding: the leather, — Russia, English calf, morocco; the lettering, the gilding, the edging, the hinge of the cover! He opens it, and shuts it, he holds it off, and brings it nigh. It suffuses his whole body with book-magnetism. He walks up and down, in a maze, at the mysterious allotments of Providence that gives so much money to men who spend it upon their appetites, and so little to men who would spend it in benevolence, or upon their refined tastes! It is astonishing, too, how one's necessities multiply in the presence of the supply. One never knows how many things it is impossible to do without till he goes to Windle's or Smith's house-furnishing stores. One is surprised to perceive, at some bazaar, or fancy and variety store, how many *conveniences* he needs.

He is satisfied that his life must have been utterly inconvenient aforesaid. And thus, too, one is inwardly convicted, at Appletons', of having lived for years without books which he is now satisfied that one can not live without!

Then, too, the subtle process by which the man convinces himself that he can afford to buy. No subtle manager or broker ever saw through a maze of financial embarrassments half so quick as a poor book-buyer sees his way clear to pay for what he *must* have. He promises with himself marvels of retrenchment; he will eat less, or less costly viands, that he may buy more food for the mind. He will take an extra patch, and go on with his raiment another year, and buy books instead of coats. Yea, he will write books, that he may buy books. He will lecture, teach, trade; he will do any honest thing for money to buy books! The appetite is insatiable. Feeding does not satisfy it. It rages by the fuel which is put upon it. As a hungry man eats first, and pays afterward, so the book-buyer purchases, and then works at the debt afterward. This paying is rather medicinal. It cures for a time. But a relapse takes place. The same longing, the same promises of self-denial. He promises himself to put spurs on both heels of his industry; and then, besides all this, he will *somehow* get along when the time for payment comes! Ah! this *some-*

how! That word is as big as a whole world, and is stuffed with all the vagaries and fantasies that Fancy ever bred upon Hope. And yet, is there not some comfort in buying books, *to be paid for*? We have heard of a sot, who wished his neck as long as the worm of a still, that he might so much the longer enjoy the flavour of the draught! Thus, it is a prolonged excitement of purchase, if you feel for six months in a slight doubt whether the book is honestly your own or not. Had you paid down, that would have been the end of it. There would have been no affectionate and beseeching look of your books at you, every time you saw them, saying, as plain as a book's eyes can say, "Do not let me be taken from you!"

Moreover, buying books before you can pay for them, promotes caution. You do not feel quite at liberty to take them home. You are married. Your wife keeps an account-book. She knows to a penny what you can and what you can not afford. She has no "speculation" in *her* eyes. Plain figures make desperate work with airy "*Somehows.*" It is a matter of no small skill and experience to get your books home, and into their proper places, undiscovered. Perhaps the blundering Express brings them to the door just at evening. "What is it, my dear?" she says to you. "Oh! nothing — a few books that I can not do without." That smile!

A true housewife that loves her husband, can smile a whole arithmetic at him in one look! Of course she insists, in the kindest way, in sympathizing with you in your literary acquisition. She cuts the strings of the bundle (and of your heart), and out comes the whole story. You have bought a complete set of costly English books, full bound in calf, extra gilt. You are caught, and feel very much as if bound in calf yourself, and admirably lettered.

Now, this must not happen frequently. The books must be smuggled home. Let them be sent to some near place. Then, when your wife has a headache, or is out making a call, or has lain down, run the books across the frontier and threshold, hastily undo them, stop only for one loving glance as you put them away in the closet, or behind other books on the shelf, or on the topmost shelf. Clear away the twine and wrapping-paper, and every suspicious circumstance. Be very careful not to be too kind. That often brings on detection. Only the other day we heard it said, somewhere, "Why, how good you have been lately. I am really afraid that you have been carrying on mischief secretly." Our heart smote us. It was a fact. That very day we had bought a few books which "we could not do without." After a while, you can bring out one volume, accidentally, and leave it on the table. "Why, my dear, *what* a beautiful

book! Where *did* you borrow it?" You glance over the newspaper, with the quietest tone you can command: "*That!* oh! that is *mine*. Have you not seen it before? It has been in the house these two months;" and you rush on with anecdote and incident, and point out the binding, and that peculiar trick of gilding, and every thing else you can think of; but it all will not do; you can not rub out that roguish arithmetical smile. People may talk about the equality of the sexes! They are not equal. The silent smile of a sensible, loving woman, will vanquish ten men. Of course you repent, and in time form a habit of repenting.

Another method which will be found peculiarly effective, is, to make a *present* of some fine work, to your wife. Of course, whether she or you have the name of buying it, it will go into your collection and be yours to all intents and purposes. But, it stops remark in the presentation. A wife could not reprove you for so kindly thinking of her. No matter what she suspects she will say nothing. And then if there are three or four more works, which have come home with the gift-book — they will pass through the favour of the other.

These are pleasures denied to wealth and old bachelors. Indeed one cannot imagine the peculiar pleasure of buying books, if one is rich and stupid. There must be some pleasure, or so many would

not do it. But the full flavour, the whole relish of delight only comes to those who are so poor that they must engineer for every book. They set down before them, and besiege them. They are captured. Each book has a secret history of ways and means. It reminds you of subtle devices by which you insured and made it yours, in spite of poverty! — *Star Papers*.

MY BOOKS

LEIGH HUNT

SITTING, last winter, among my books, and walled round with all the comfort and protection they and my fireside could afford me; to wit, a table of high-piled books at my back, my writing-desk on one side of me, some shelves on the other, and the feeling of the warm fire at my feet; I began to consider how I loved the authors of these books, — how I loved them, too, not only for the imaginative pleasures they afforded me, but for their making me love the very books themselves, and delight to be in contact with them. I looked sideways at my *Spenser*, my *Theocritus*, and my *Arabian Nights*; then above them at my Italian poets; then behind me at my *Dryden* and *Pope*, my romances, and my *Boccaccio*; then on my left side at my *Chaucer*, who lay on a writing desk; and thought how natural it was in C. L. to give a kiss to an old folio, as I once saw him do to Chapman's *Homer*. At the same time I wondered how he could sit in that front room of his with nothing but a few unfeeling tables and chairs, or at best a few engravings in trim frames, instead of putting a couple of arm-chairs

into the back-room with the books in it, where there is but one window. Would I were there, with both the chairs properly filled, and one or two more besides! "We had talk, sir" — the only talk capable of making one forget the books.

I entrench myself in my books equally against sorrow and the weather. If the wind comes through a passage, I look about to see how I can fence it off by a better disposition of my movables; if a melancholy thought is importunate, I give another glance at my *Spenser*. When I speak of being in contact with my books, I mean it literally. I like to lean my head against them. Living in a southern climate, though in a part sufficiently northern to feel the winter, I was obliged, during that season, to take some of the books out of the study, and hang them up near the fireplace in the sitting-room, which is the only room that has such a convenience. I therefore walled myself in, as well as I could, in the manner above mentioned. I took a walk every day, to the astonishment of the Genoese, who used to huddle against a piece of sunny wall, like flies on a chimney-piece; but I did this only that I might so much the more enjoy my *English* evening. The fire was a wood fire instead of a coal; but I imagined myself in the country. I remember at the very worst that one end of my native land was not nearer the other than England is to Italy.

While writing this article I am in my study again. Like the rooms in all houses in this country which are not hovels, it is handsome and ornamented. On one side it looks toward a garden and the mountains; on another to the mountains and the sea. What signifies all this? I turn my back upon the sea; I shut up even one of the side windows looking upon the mountains, and retain no prospect but that of the trees. On the right and left of me are book-shelves; a bookcase is affectionately open in front of me; and thus kindly enclosed by my books and the green leaves, I write. If all this is too luxurious and effeminate, of all luxuries it is the one that leaves you the most strength. And this is to be said for scholarship in general. It unfits a man for activity, for his bodily part in the world; but it often doubles both the power and the sense of his mental duties; and with much indignation against his body, and more against those who tyrannize over the intellectual claims of mankind, the man of letters, like the magician of old, is prepared "to play the devil" with the great men of this world, in a style that astonishes both the sword and the toga.

I do not like this fine large study. I like elegance. I like room to breathe in, and even walk about, when I want to breathe and walk about. I like a great library next my study; but for the

study itself, give me a small snug place, almost entirely walled with books. There should be only one window in it, looking upon trees. Some prefer a place with few or no books at all — nothing but a chair or a table, like Epictetus; but I should say that these were philosophers, not lovers of books, if I did not recollect that Montaigne was both. He had a study in a round tower, walled as aforesaid. It is true, one forgets one's books while writing — at least they say so. For my part, I think I have them in a sort of sidelong mind's-eye; like a second thought, which is none — like a waterfall or a whispering wind.

I dislike a grand library to study in. I mean an immense apartment, with books all in Museum order, especially wire-safed. I say nothing against the Museum itself, or public libraries. They are capital places to go to, but not to sit in; and talking of this, I hate to read in public, and in strange company. The jealous silence; the dissatisfied looks of the messengers; the inability to help yourself; the not knowing whether you really ought to trouble the messengers, much less the *gentleman* in black, or brown, who is, perhaps, half a trustee; with a variety of other jarings between privacy and publicity, prevent one's settling heartily to work. They say "they manage these things better in France"; and I dare say they do; but I think I

should feel still more *distrain* in France, in spite of the benevolence of the servitors, and the general profusion of pens, ink, and paper. I should feel as if I were doing nothing but interchanging amenities with polite writers.

A grand private library, which the master of the house also makes his study, never looks to me like a real place of books, much less of authorship. I can not take kindly to it. It is certainly not out of envy; for three parts of the books are generally trash, and I can seldom think of the rest and the proprietor together. It reminds me of a fine gentleman, of a collector, of a patron, of Gil Blas and the Marquis of Marialva; of anything but genius and comfort. I have a particular hatred of a round table (not *the* Round Table, for that was a dining one) covered and irradiated with books, and never met with one in the house of a clever man but once. It is the reverse of Montaigne's Round Tower. Instead of bringing the books around you, they all seem turning another way, and eluding your hands.

Conscious of my propriety and comfort in these matters, I take an interest in the bookcases as well as the books of my friends. I long to meddle and dispose them after my own notions. When they see this confession, they will acknowledge the virtue I have practised. I believe I did mention his book-room to C. L., and I think he told me that

he often sat there when alone. It would be hard not to believe him. His library, though not abounding in Greek or Latin (which are the only things to help some persons to an idea of literature), is anything but superficial. The depth of philosophy and poetry are there, the innermost passages of the human heart. It has some Latin too. It has also a handsome contempt for appearance. It looks like what it is, a selection made at precious intervals from the book-stalls; now a Chaucer at nine and two pence; now a Montaigne or a Sir Thomas Browne at two shillings; now a Jeremy Taylor; a Spinoza; an old English Dramatist, Prior, and Sir Philip Sidney, and the books are "neat as imported." The very perusal of the backs is "a discipline of humanity." There Mr. Southey takes his place again with an old Radical friend: there Jeremy Collier is at peace with Dryden: there the lion, Martin Luther, lies down with the Quaker lamb Sewell: there Guzman's Alfarache thinks himself fit company for Sir Charles Grandison, and has his claims admitted. Even the "high fantastical" Duchess of Newcastle, with her laurel on her head, is received with grave honours, and not the less for declining to trouble herself with the constitutions of her maids. There is an approach to this in the library of W. C., who also includes Italian among his humanities. W. H., I believe,

has no books except mine; but he has Shakespeare and Rousseau by heart. N., who, though not a bookman by profession, is fond of those who are, and who loves his volume enough to read it across the fields, has his library in the common sitting-room, which is hospitable. H. R.'s books are all too modern and finely bound, which, however, is not his fault, for they were left him by will — not the most kindly act of the testator. Suppose a man were to bequeath us a great Japan chest three feet by four, with an injunction that it was always to stand on the tea-table. I remember borrowing a book of H. R., which, having lost, I replaced with a copy equally well bound. I am not sure I should have been in such haste, even to return the book, had it been a common-looking volume; but the splendour of the loss dazzled me into this ostentatious piece of propriety. I set about restoring it as if I had diminished his fortunes, and waived the privilege a friend has to use a man's things as his own. I may venture upon this ultra-liberal theory, not only because candour compels me to say that I hold it to a greater extent, with Montaigne, but because I have been a meek son in the family of book-losers. I may affirm, upon a moderate calculation, that I have lent and lost in my time (and I am eight-and-thirty) half a dozen decent-sized libraries — I mean books enough to fill so many ordinary book-

cases. I have never complained; and self love as well as gratitude makes me love those who do not complain of me.

I own I borrow books with as much facility as I lend. I cannot see a work that interests me on another person's shelf, without a wish to carry it off; but, I repeat, that I have been much more sinned against than sinning in the article of non-return; and am scrupulous in the article of intention. I never had a felonious intent upon a book but once; and then I shall only say, it was under circumstances so peculiar, that I cannot but look upon the conscience that induced me to restore it, as having sacrificed the spirit of its very self to the letter; and I have a grudge against it accordingly. Some people are unwilling to lend their books. I have a special grudge against them, particularly those who accompany their unwillingness with uneasy professions to the contrary, and smiles like Sir Fretful Plagiary. The friend who helped to spoil my notions of property, or rather to make them too good for the world "as it goes," taught me also to undervalue my squeamishness in refusing to avail myself of the books of these gentlemen. He showed me how it was doing good to all parties to put an ordinary face on the matter; though I know his own blushed not a little in doing it, even when the good to be done was for another. I feel,

in truth, that even when anger inclines me to exercise this privilege of philosophy, it is more out of revenge than contempt. I fear that in allowing myself to borrow books, I sometimes make extremes meet in a very sinful manner, and do it out of a refined revenge. It is like eating a miser's beef at him.

I yield to none in my love of bookstall urbanity. I have spent as happy moments over the stalls as any literary apprentice boy who ought to be moving onwards. But I confess my weakness in liking to see some of my favourite purchases neatly bound. The books I like to have about me most are — Spenser, Chaucer, the minor poems of Milton, the *Arabian Nights*, Theocritus, Ariosto, and such old, good-natured speculations as Plutarch's *Morals*. For most of these I like a plain, good, old binding, never mind how old, provided it wears well; but my *Arabian Nights* may be bound in as fine and flowery style as possible, and I should love an engraving to every dozen pages. Book prints of all sorts, bad and good, take with me as much as when I was a child; and I think some books, such as Prior's *Poems*, ought always to have portraits of the authors. Prior's airy face with his cap on is like having his company. From early association, no edition of Milton pleases me so much as that in which there are pictures of the Devil with brute

ears, dressed like a Roman General: nor of Bunyan, as the one containing the print of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, with the Devil whispering in Christian's ear, or old Pope by the wayside, and

"Vanity Fair,
With the Pilgrims suffering there!"

I delight in the recollection of the puzzle I used to have with the frontispiece of the *Tale of the Tub*, of my real horror at the sight of that crawling old man, representing Avarice, at the beginning of *Enfield's Speaker*, the *Looking-Glass*, or some such book; and even of the careless schoolboy hats, and the prim stomachers and cottager bonnets, of such golden-age antiquities as the Village School period. The oldest and most worn out woodcut, representing King Pipin, Goody Two Shoes, or the grim Soldan, sitting with three staring blots for his eyes and mouth, his sceptre in one hand, and his other five fingers raised and spread in admiration at the feats of the Gallant London Prentice, cannot excite in me a feeling of ingratitude. Cooke's edition of the *British Poets* and *Novelists* came out when I was at school; for which reason I could never put up with Suttaby's, or Walker's publications, except in the case of such works as the *Fairy Tales*: which Mr. Cooke did not publish. Besides, they are too cramped, thick, and mercenary; and the pictures are all frontispieces. They do

not come in at the proper places. Cooke realized the old woman's *beau idéal* of a prayer-book — "A little book, with a great deal of matter, and a large type": — for the type was really large for so small a volume. I shall never forget his Collins and his Gray, books at once so "superbly ornamented" and so inconceivably cheap! Sixpence could procure much before; but never could it procure so much as then, or was at once so much respected, and so little cared for. His artist Kirk was the best artist, except Stothard, that ever designed for periodical works; and I will venture to add (if his name rightly announces his country) the best artist Scotland ever produced, except Wilkie, but he unfortunately had not enough of his country in him to keep him from dying young. His designs for Milton and the *Arabian Nights*, his female extricated from the water in the *Tales of the Genii*, and his old hag issuing out of the chest of the Merchant Abadah in the same book, are before me now, as vividly as they were then. He possessed elegance and the sense of beauty in no ordinary degree; though they sometimes played a trick or so of foppery. I shall never forget the gratitude with which I received an odd number of Akenside, value sixpence, one of the set of that poet, which a boarder distributed among three or four of us, "with his mother's compliments." The

present might have been more lavish, but I hardly thought of that. I remember my number. It was one in which there was a picture of the poet on a sofa, with Cupid coming to him, and the words underneath, "Tempt me no more, insidious love!" The picture and the number appeared to me equally divine. I cannot help thinking to this day that it is right and natural in a gentleman to sit in a stage dress, on that particular kind of a sofa, though on no other, with that exclusive hat and feathers on his head, telling Cupid to be gone, with a tragic air.

I love an author the more for having been himself a lover of books. The idea of an ancient library perplexes our sympathy by its map-like volumes, rolled upon cylinders. Our imagination cannot take kindly to a yard of wit, or to thirty inches of moral observation, rolled out like linen in a draper's shop. But we conceive of Plato as of a lover of books; of Aristotle certainly; of Plutarch, Pliny, Horace, Julian, and Marcus Aurelius, Virgil, too, must have been one; and, after a fashion, Martial. May I confess, that the passage which I recollect with the greatest pleasure in Cicero is where he says that books delight us at home, *and are no impediment abroad*; travel with us, ruralize with us. His period is rounded off to some purpose: "*Delectant domi, non impediunt foris; peregrinantur, rusti-*

cantur." I am so much of this opinion that I do not care to be anywhere without having a book or books at hand, and, like Dr. Orkborne, in the novel of *Camilla*, stuff the coach or post-chaise with them whenever I travel. As books, however, become ancient, the love of them becomes more unequivocal and conspicuous. The ancients had little of what we call learning. They made it. They were also no very eminent buyers of books — they made books for posterity. It is true, that it is not at all necessary to love many books in order to love them much. The scholar, in Chaucer, who would rather have

"At his beddes head

A twenty bokes, clothed in black and red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
Than robès rich, or fiddle, or psaltrie,"

doubtless beat all our modern collectors in his passion for reading; but books must at least exist, and have acquired an eminence, before their lovers can make themselves known. There must be a possession, also, to perfect the communion; and the mere contact is much, even when our mistress speaks an unknown language. Dante puts Homer, the great ancient, in his *Elysium* upon trust; but a few years afterwards, *Homer*, the book, made its appearance in Italy, and Petrarch, in a transport, put it upon his book-shelves, where he adored it,

like "the unknown God." Petrarch ought to be the god of the bibliomaniacs, for he was a collector and a man of genius, which is a union that does not often happen. He copied out, with his own precious hand, the manuscripts he rescued from time, and then produced others for time to reverence. With his head upon a book he died. Boccaccio, his friend, was another; nor can one look upon the longest and most tiresome works he wrote (for he did write some tiresome ones, in spite of the gaiety of his *Decameron*), without thinking, that in that resuscitation of the world of letters it must have been natural to a man of genius to add to the existing stock of volumes, at whatsoever price. I always pitch my completest idea of a lover of books, either in those dark ages, as they are called —

"Cui cieco a torto il cieco volgo appella" —

or in the gay town days of Charles II., or a little afterwards. In both times the portrait comes out by the force of contrast. In the first, I imagine an age of iron warfare and energy, with solitary retreats, in which the monk or the hooded scholar walks forth to meditate, his precious volume under his arm. In the other, I have a triumphant example of the power of books and wit to contest the victory with sensual pleasure:—Rochester, staggering home

to pen a satire in the style of Monsieur Boileau; Butler, cramming his jolly duodecimo with all the learning that he laughed at; and a new race of book poets come up, who, in spite of their periwigs and *petitsmaîtres*, talk as romantically of "the bays" as if they were priests of Delphos. It was a victorious thing in books to beguile even the old French of their egotism, or at least to share it with them. Nature never pretended to do as much. And here is the difference between the two ages, or between any two ages in which genius and art predominate. In the one, books are loved because they are the records of Nature and her energies; in the other, because they are the records of those records, or evidences of the importance of the individuals, and proofs of our descent in the new imperishable aristocracy. This is the reason why rank (with few exceptions) is so jealous of literature, and loves to appropriate or withhold the honours of it, as if they were so many toys and ribbons, like its own. It has an instinct that the two pretensions are incompatible. When Montaigne (a real lover of books) affected the order of St. Michael, and pleased himself with possessing that fugitive little piece of importance, he did it because he would pretend to be above nothing that he really felt, or that was felt by men in general; but at the same time he vindicated his natural superiority over this weak-

ness by praising and loving all higher and lasting things, and by placing his best glory in doing homage to the geniuses that had gone before him. He did not endeavour to think that an immortal renown was a fashion, like that of the cut of his scarf; or that by undervaluing the one, he should go shining down to posterity in the other, perpetual lord of Montaigne and of the ascendant.

There is a period of modern times, at which the love of books appears to have been of a more decided nature than at either of these — I mean the age just before and just after the Reformation, or rather all that period when book-writing was confined to the learned languages. Erasmus is the god of it. Bacon, a mighty bookman, saw, among his other sights, the great advantage of loosening the vernacular tongue, and wrote both Latin and English. I allow this is the greatest closeted age of books; of old scholars sitting in dusty studies; of heaps of "illustrious obscure," rendering themselves more illustrious and more obscure by retreating from the "thorny queaches" of Dutch and German names into the "vacant interlunar caves" of appellations latinized or translated. I think I see all their volumes now, filling the shelves of a dozen German convents. The authors are bearded men, sitting in old woodcuts, in caps and gowns, and their books are dedicated to princes and states-

men, as illustrious as themselves. My old friend Wierus, who wrote a thick book, *De Praestigiis Daemonorum*, was one of them, and had a fancy worthy of his sedentary stomach! I will confess, once for all, that I have a liking for them all. It is my link with the bibliomaniacs, whom I admit into our relationship, because my love is large, and my family pride nothing. But still I take my idea of books read with a gusto, of companions for bed and board, from the two ages before mentioned. The other is of too bookworm a description. There must be both a judgment and a fervour; a discrimination and a boyish eagerness; and (with all due humility) something of a point of contact between authors worth reading and the reader. How can I take Juvenal into the fields, or Valcarenghius *De Aortae Aneurismate* to bed with me? How could I expect to walk before the face of Nature with the one; to tire my elbow properly with the other, before I put out my candle, and turn round deliciously on the right side? Or how could I stick up Coke upon Littleton against something on the dinner-table, and be divided between a fresh paragraph and a mouthful of salad?

I take our four great English poets to have all been fond of reading. Milton and Chaucer proclaim themselves for hard sitters at books. Spenser's reading is evident by his learning; and if there

were nothing else to show for it in Shakespeare, his retiring to his native town, long before old age, would be a proof of it. It is impossible for a man to live in solitude without such assistance, unless he is a metaphysician or mathematician, or the dullest of mankind; and any country town would be solitude to Shakespeare, after the bustle of a metropolis and a theatre. Doubtless he divided his time between his books and his bowling-green and his daughter Susanna. It is pretty certain, also, that he planted, and rode on horseback; and there is evidence of all sorts to make it clear, that he must have occasionally joked with the blacksmith, and stood godfather for his neighbour's children. Chaucer's account of himself must be quoted, for the delight and sympathy of all true readers:—

“And as for me, though that I can but lite,
On bookès for to rede I me delite,
And to hem yeve I faith and full credènce,
And in mine herte have hem in reverence
So hertely, that there is gamè none,
That fromy bookès maketh me to gone,
But it is seldome on the holy daie;
Save certainly whan that the month of May
Is comen, and that I hear the foulès sing,
And that the flourès ginnen for to spring.
Farewell my booke and my devociön.”

— *The Legend of Good Women.*

And again in the second book of his *House of Fame*,
where *the eagle* addresses him:—

“Thou wilt make

At night full oft thine head to ake,
And in thy study as thou writest,
And evermore of Love enditest,
In honour of him and his praisings,
And in his folkès furtherings
And in his matter all devisest,
And not him ne his folke despisest,
Although thou mayest go in the daunse
Of hem, that him list not advance;
Therefore as I said, ywis,
Jupiter considreth well this.
And also, beausire, of other things;
That is, thou hast no tidings
Of Lovès folke, if they be glade,
Ne of nothing else that God made,
And not only fro ferre countree,
But no tidings commen to thee,
Not of thy very neighbouris,
That dwellen almost at thy dores;
Thou hearest neither that ne this
For whan thy labour all done is,
And hast made all thy rekenings,
Instead of rest and of new things,
Thou goest home to thy house anone,
And all so dombe as anie stone,
Thou sittest at another booke,
Till fully dazed is thy looke.”

After I think of the bookishness of Chaucer and

Milton, I always make a great leap to Prior and Fenton. Prior was first noticed, when a boy, by Lord Dorset, sitting in his uncle's tavern, and reading Horace. He describes himself years after, when Secretary of Embassy at the Hague, as taking the same author with him in the Saturday's chaise, in which he and his mistress used to escape from town cares into the country, to the admiration of Dutch beholders. Fenton was a martyr to contented scholarship (including a sirloin and a bottle of wine), and died among his books of inactivity. "He rose late," says Johnson, "and when he had risen, sat down to his books and papers." A woman that once waited on him in a lodging, told him, as she said, that he would "lie a-bed and be fed with a spoon." He must have had an enviable liver, if he was happy. I must own (if my conscience would let me), I should like to lead half the year, just such a life (woman included, though not that woman), the other half being passed in the fields and woods, with a cottage just big enough to hold us. Dacier and his wife had a pleasant time of it; both fond of books, both scholars, both amiable, both wrapt up in the ancient world, and helping one another at their tasks. If they were not happy, matrimony would be a rule even without an exception. Pope does not strike me as being a bookman; he was curious rather than enthusiastic; more

nice than wise; he dabbled in modern Latin poetry, which is a bad symptom. Swift was decidedly a reader; the *Tale of a Tub*, in its fashion as well as substance, is the work of a scholarly wit; the *Battle of the Books* is the fancy of a lover of libraries. Addison and Steele were too much given up to Button's and the town. Periodical writing, though its demands seem otherwise, is not favourable to reading; it becomes too much a matter of business, and will either be attended to at the expense of the writer's books, or books, the very admonishers of his industry will make him idle. Besides, a periodical work, to be suitable to its character, and warrant its regular recurrence, must involve something of a gossiping nature, and proceed upon experiences familiar to the existing community, or at least likely to be received by them in consequence of some previous tinge of inclination. You do not pay weekly visits to your friends to lecture them, whatever good you may do their minds. There will be something compulsory in reading the *Ramblers*, as there is in going to church. Addison and Steele undertook to regulate the minor morals of society, and effected a world of good, with which scholarship had little to do. Gray was a bookman; he wished to be always lying on sofas, reading "eternal new novels of Crebillon and Marivaux." This is a true hand. The elaborate

and scientific look of the rest of his reading was owing to the necessity of employing himself: he had not health and spirits for the literary voluptuousness he desired. Collins, for the same reason, could not employ himself; he was obliged to dream over Arabian tales, to let the light of the supernatural world half in upon his eyes. "He loved," as Johnson says (in that strain of music, inspired by tenderness), "fairies, genii, giants, and monsters; he delighted to rove through the meanders of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the waterfalls of Elysian gardens." If Collins had had a better constitution, I do not believe that he would have written his projected work upon the *Restoration of Literature*, fit as he was by scholarship for the task, but he would have been the greatest poet since the days of Milton. If his friend Thomas Warton had had a little more of his delicacy of organization, the love of books would almost have made him a poet. His edition of the minor poems of Milton is a wilderness of sweets. It is the only one in which a true lover of the original can pardon an exuberance of annotation; though I confess that I am inclined enough to pardon any notes that resemble it, however numerous. The "builded rhyme" stands at the top of the page, like a fair edifice, with all sorts of flowers and fresh waters at its feet. The

young poet lives there, served by the nymphs and fauns.

"Hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades.
Huc ades, o formose puer; tibi lilia plenis
Ecce ferunt nymphae calathis: tibi candida Nais
Pallentes violas et summa papavera cardens,
Narcissum et florem jungit bene olentis anethi."

Among the old writers I must not forget Ben Jonson and Donne. Cowley has been already mentioned. His boyish love of books, like all the other inclinations of his early life, stuck to him to the last, which is the greatest reward of virtue. I would mention Izaak Walton, if I had not a grudge against him. His brother fishermen, the divines, were also great fishers of books. I have a grudge against them and their divinity. They talked much of the devil and divine right, and yet forgot what Shakespeare says of the devil's friend Nero, that he is "an angler in the lake of darkness." Selden was called "the walking library of our nation." It is not the pleasantest idea of him; but the library included poetry, and wit, as well as heraldry and the Jewish doctors. His *Table Talk* is equally pithy and pleasant, and truly worthy of the name, for it implies other speakers. Indeed, it was actually what it is called, and treasured up by his friends. Selden wrote complimentary verses to his friends the poets, and a commentary on Drayton's *Polyolbion*. Drayton

was himself a reader, addicted to all the luxuries of scholarship. Chapman sat among his books, like an astrologer among his spheres and altitudes.

How pleasant it is to reflect, that all those lovers of books have themselves become books! What better metamorphoses could Pythagoras have desired? How Ovid and Horace exulted in anticipating theirs! And how the world has justified their exultation! They had a right to triumph over brass and marble. It is the only visible change which changes no farther; which generates and yet is not destroyed. Consider: minds themselves are exhausted; cities perish; kingdoms are swept away, and man weeps with indignation to think that his own body is not immortal.

"Muiono le città, muiono i regni,
E l'uom d'esser mortal par che si sdegni."

Yet this little body of thought, that lies before me in the shape of a book, has existed thousands of years, nor since the invention of the press can anything short of an universal convulsion of nature abolish it. To a shape like this, so small yet so comprehensive, so slight yet so lasting, so insignificant yet so venerable, turns the mighty activity of Homer, and, so turning, is enabled to live and warm us forever. To a shape like this turns the placid sage of Academus: To a shape like this the

grandeur of Milton, the exuberance of Spenser, the pungent elegance of Pope, and the volatility of Prior. In one small room, like the compressed spirits of Milton, can be gathered together

"The assembled souls of all that men held wise."

May I hope to become the meanest of these existences? This is a question which every author who is a lover of books asks himself some time in his life; and which must be pardoned, because it cannot be helped. I know not. I cannot exclaim with the poet,

"O that my name were number'd among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days."

For my mortal days, few and feeble as the rest of them may be, are of consequence to others. But I should like to remain visible in this shape. The little of myself that pleases myself, I could wish to be accounted worth pleasing others. I should like to survive so, were it only for the sake of those who love me in private, knowing as I do what a treasure is the possession of a friend's mind when he is no more. At all events, nothing while I live and think can deprive me of my value for such treasures. I can help the appreciation of them while I last, and love them till I die; and perhaps, if fortune turns her face once more in kindness upon me before I go, I may chance, some quiet day, to lay

my overbeating temples on a book, and so have the death I most envy. — *Collected Essays*.

(This paper was written during Hunt's residence in Italy. The initials "C. L.", "W. H.", "H. R.", and "N." are those of Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Henry Robinson, and Vincent Novello.)

OF STUDIES

FRANCIS BACON

STUDIES serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight, is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business; for expert men can execute, and perhaps, judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies, is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience; for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men condemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them. For they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation.

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse,

but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. That is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books: else distilled books are, like common distilled waters, flashy things.

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man; and, therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that which he doth not.

Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend: *Abeunt studia in mores*; nay, there is no stound or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies, like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises: bowling is good for the stone and reins, shooting for the lungs and breast, gentle walking for the stomach, riding for the head, and the like; so, if a man's wits be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if

his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again; if his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen, for they are *cymini sectores*. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call upon one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt. — *Essays*.

A LADY'S LIBRARY

JOSEPH ADDISON

. . . Non illa colo calathivæ Minervæ
Femineas assueta manus. — *Virg.*

SOME Months ago, my Friend Sir Roger, being in the Country, enclosed a Letter to me, directed to a certain Lady whom I shall here call by the Name of Leonora, and as it contained Matters of Consequence, desired me to deliver it to her with my own Hand. Accordingly I waited upon her Ladyship pretty early in the Morning, and was desired by her Woman to walk into her Lady's Library, till such time as she was in Readiness to receive me. The very sound of a Lady's Library gave me a great Curiosity to see it; and, as it was some time before the Lady came to me, I had an Opportunity of turning over a great many of her Books, which were ranged in a very beautiful Order. At the End of the Folios (which were finely bound and gilt) were great Jars of China placed one above another in a very noble piece of Architecture. The Quartos were separated from the Octavos by a pile of smaller Vessels, which rose in a delightful Pyramid. The Octavos were bounded

by Tea Dishes of all Shapes, Colours and Sizes, which were so disposed on a wooden Frame, that they looked like one continued Pillar indented with the finest Strokes of Sculpture, and stained with the greatest Variety of Dyes. That Part of the Library which was designed for the Reception of Plays and Pamphlets, and other loose Papers, was inclosed in a kind of Square, consisting of one of the prettiest Grotesque Works that ever I saw, and made up of Scaramouches, Lions, Monkies, Mandarins, Trees, Shells, and a thousand other odd Figures in China Ware. In the midst of the Room was a little Japan Table, with a Quire of gilt Paper upon it, and on the Paper a Silver Snuff-box made in the Shape of a little Book. I found there were several other Counterfeit Books upon the upper Shelves, which were carved in Wood, and served only to fill up the Number, like Faggots in the Muster of a Regiment. I was wonderfully pleased with such a mixt kind of Furniture, as seemed very suitable both to the Lady and the Scholar, and did not know at first whether I should fancy my self in a Grotto, or in a Library.

Upon my looking into the Books, I found there were some few which the Lady had bought for her own use, but that most of them had been got together, either because she had heard them praised, or because she had seen the Authors of them.

Among several that I examined, I very well remember these that follow.

Ogleby's Virgil Cleopatra.

Dryden's Juvenal. Astraea.

Cassandra. Sir Isaac Newton's Works.

The Grand Cyrus: with a Pin stuck in one of the middle Leaves.

Pembroke's Arcadia.

Locke on Human Understanding: with a Paper of Patches in it.

A Spelling Book.

A Dictionary for the Explanation of hard Words.

Sherlock upon Death.

The fifteen Comforts of Matrimony.

Sir William Temple's Essays.

Father Malbranche's Search after Truth, translated into English.

A book of Novels.

The Academy of Compliments.

Culpepper's Midwifery.

The Ladies Calling.

Tales in Verse by Mr. Dufey: Bound in Red Leather, gilt on the Back, and doubled down in several Places.

All the Classic Authors in Wood.

A Set of Elzivers by the same Hand.

Celia: Which opened of itself in the Place that describes two Lovers in a Bower.

Baker's Chronicle.

Advice to a Daughter.

• The New Atlantis, with a Key to it.

Mr. Steele's Christian Heroe.

A Prayer Book: With a Bottle of Hungary Water
by the side of it.

Dr. Sacheverell's Speech.

Fielding's Tryal.

Seneca's Morals.

Taylor's Holy Living and Dying.

La Ferte's Instructions for Country Dances.

I was taking a Catalogue in my Pocket-Book of these, and several other Authors, when Leonora entered, and upon my presenting her with the Letter from the Knight, told me, with an unspeakable Grace, that she hoped Sir Roger was in good Health: I answered Yes, for I hate long Speeches, and after a Bow or two retired.

Leonora was formerly a celebrated Beauty, and is still a very lovely Woman. She has been a Widow for two or three Years, and being unfortunate in her first Marriage, has taken a Resolution never to venture upon a second. She has no Children to take care of, and leaves the Management of her Estate to my good Friend Sir Roger. But as the Mind naturally sinks into a kind of Lethargy, and falls asleep, that is not agitated by some Favourite Pleasures and Pursuits, Leonora has turned all

the Passions of her Sex into a love of Books and Retirement. She converses chiefly with Men (as she has often said herself) but it is only in their Writings; and admits of very few Male-Visitants, except my Friend Sir Roger, whom she hears with great Pleasure, and without Scandal. As her Reading has lain very much among Romances, it has given her a very particular Turn of Thinking, and discovers itself even in her House, her Gardens, and her Furniture. Sir Roger has entertained me an Hour together with a description of her Country-Seat, which is situated in a kind of wilderness, about a hundred Miles distant from London, and looks like a little enchanted Palace. The Rocks about here are shaped in Artificial Grottoes, covered with Woodbines and Jessamines. The woods are cut into shady Walks, twisted into Bowers, and filled with Cages of Turtles. The Springs are made to run among Pebbles, and by that means taught to murmur very agreeably. They are likewise collected into a beautiful Lake, that is inhabited by a Couple of Swans, and empties it self by a little Rivulet which runs through a green Meadow, and is known in the Family by the Name of The Purling Stream. The Knight likewise tells me, that this Lady preserves her Game better than any of the Gentlemen in that Country; not (says Sir Roger) that she sets so great a Value upon her Partridges

and Pheasants, as upon her Larks and Nightingales. For she says that every Bird which is killed on her Ground, will spoil a Consort, and that she shall certainly miss him next Year.

When I think how oddly this Lady is improved by Learning, I look upon her with a mixture of Admiration and Pity. Amidst these innocent Entertainments which she has formed to her self, how much more Valuable does she appear than those of her Sex, who employ themselves in Diversions that are less Reasonable, though more in Fashion? What Improvements would a Woman have made, who is susceptible of Impressions from what she reads, had she been guided to such Books as have a tendency to enlighten the Understanding and rectifie the Passions, as well as to those which are of little more use than to divert the Imagination?

But the manner of a Lady's employing herself usefully in Reading shall be the Subject of another Paper, in which I design to recommend such particular Books as may be proper for the Improvement of the Sex. And as this is a Subject of a very nice Nature, I shall desire my Correspondents to give me their Thoughts upon it.

— *The Spectator*, No. 37.

THE ART OF BOOK MAKING

WASHINGTON IRVING

"If that severe doom of Synesius be true—'It is a greater offence to steal dead men's labour, than their clothes,' what shall become of most writers?"—*Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy*.

I HAVE often wondered at the extreme fecundity of the press, and how it comes to pass that so many heads, on which nature seemed to have inflicted the curse of barrenness, should teem with voluminous productions. As a man travels on, however, in the journey of life, his objects of wonder daily diminish, and he is continually finding out some very simple cause for some great matter of marvel. Thus have I chanced, in my peregrinations about this great metropolis, to blunder upon a scene which unfolded to me some of the mysteries of the book-making craft, and at once put an end to my astonishment.

I was one summer's day loitering through the great saloons of the British Museum, with that listlessness with which one is apt to saunter about a museum in warm weather; sometimes lolling over the glass cases of minerals, sometimes studying the hieroglyphics on an Egyptian mummy, and sometimes trying, with nearly equal success,

to comprehend the allegorical paintings on the lofty ceilings. Whilst I was gazing about in this idle way, my attention was attracted to a distant door, at the end of a suite of apartments. It was closed, but every now and then it would open, and some strange-favoured being, generally clothed in black, would steal forth, and glide through the rooms, without noticing any of the surrounding objects. There was an air of mystery about this that piqued my languid curiosity, and I determined to attempt the passage of that strait, and to explore the unknown regions beyond. The door yielded to my hand, with that facility with which the portals of enchanted castles yield to the adventurous knight-errant. I found myself in a spacious chamber, surrounded with great cases of venerable books. Above the cases, and just under the cornice, were arranged a great number of black-looking portraits of ancient authors. About the room were placed long tables, with stands for reading and writing, at which sat many pale, studious personages, poring intently over dusty volumes, rummaging among mouldy manuscripts, and taking copious notes of their contents. A hushed stillness reigned through this mysterious apartment, excepting that you might hear the racing of pens over sheets of paper, or occasionally, the deep sigh of one of these sages, as he shifted his

position to turn over the page of an old folio; doubtless arising from that hollowness and flatulency incident to learned research.

Now and then one of these personages would write something on a small slip of paper, and ring a bell, whereupon a familiar would appear, take the paper in profound silence, glide out of the room, and return shortly loaded with ponderous tomes, upon which the other would fall tooth and nail with famished voracity. I had no longer a doubt that I had happened upon a body of magi deeply engaged in the study of occult sciences. The scene reminded me of an old Arabian tale, of a philosopher shut up in an enchanted library, in the bosom of a mountain, which opened only once a year; where he made the spirits of the place bring him books of all kinds of dark knowledge, so that at the end of the year, when the magic portal once more swung open on its hinges, he issued forth so versed in forbidden lore, as to be able to soar above the heads of the multitude, and to control the powers of nature.

My curiosity being now fully aroused, I whispered to one of the familiars, as he was about to leave the room, and begged an interpretation of the strange scene before me. A few words were sufficient for the purpose. I found that these mysterious personages, whom I had mistaken for magi,

were principally authors, and in the very act of manufacturing books. I was, in fact, in the reading-room of the great British Library — an immense collection of volumes of all ages and languages, many of which are now forgotten, and most of which are seldom read; one of these sequestered pools of obsolete literature, to which modern authors repair, and draw buckets full of classic lore, or “pure English, undefiled,” wherewith to swell their own scanty rills of thought.

Being now in possession of the secret, I sat down in a corner, and watched the process of this book manufactory. I noticed an unclean, bilious-looking wight, who sought none but the most worm-eaten volumes, printed in black-letter. He was evidently constructing some work of profound erudition, that would be purchased by every man who wished to be thought learned, placed upon a conspicuous shelf of his library, or laid open upon his table; but never read. I observed him, now and then, draw a large fragment of biscuit out of his pocket, and gnaw; whether it was his dinner, or whether he was endeavouring to keep off that exhaustion of the stomach produced by much pondering over dry works, I leave to harder students than myself to determine.

There was one dapper little gentleman in bright-coloured clothes, with a chirping, gossiping expres-

sion of countenance, who had all the appearance of an author on good terms with his bookseller. After considering him attentively, I recognised in him a diligent getter-up of miscellaneous works, which bustled off well with the trade. I was curious to see how he manufactured his wares. He made more stir and show of business than any of the others; dipping into various books, fluttering over the leaves of manuscripts, taking a morsel out of one, a morsel out of another, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little." The contents of his book seemed to be as heterogeneous as those of the witches' caldron in *Macbeth*. It was here a finger and there a thumb, toe of frog and blind worm's sting, with his own gossip poured in like "baboon's blood," to make the medley "slab and good."

After all, thought I, may not this pilfering disposition be implanted in authors for wise purposes; may it not be the way in which Providence has taken care that the seeds of knowledge and wisdom shall be preserved from age to age, in spite of the inevitable decay of the works in which they were first produced? We see that nature has wisely, though whimsically, provided for the conveyance of seed from clime to clime, in the maws of certain birds; so that animals, which, in themselves, are little better than carrion, and apparently

the lawless plunderers of the orchard and the corn-field, are, in fact, nature's carriers to disperse and perpetuate her blessings. In like manner, the beauties and fine thoughts of obsolete authors are caught up by these flights of predatory writers, and cast forth again to flourish and bear fruit in a remote and distant tract of time. Many of their works, also, undergo a kind of metempsychosis, and spring up under new forms. What was formerly a ponderous history revives in the shape of a romance — an old legend changes into a modern play — and a sober philosophical treatise furnishes the body for a whole series of bouncing and sparkling essays. Thus it is in the clearing of our American woodlands; where we burn down a forest of stately pines, a progeny of dwarf oaks start up in their place: and we never see the prostrate trunk of a tree mouldering into soil, but it gives birth to a whole tribe of fungi.

Let us not, then, lament over the decay and oblivion into which ancient writers descend; they do but submit to the great law of nature, which declares that all sublunary shapes of matter shall be limited in their duration, but which decrees, also, that their elements shall never perish. Generation after generation, both in animal and vegetable life, passes away, but the vital principle is transmitted to posterity, and the species continue

to flourish. Thus, also, do authors beget authors, and having produced a numerous progeny, in a good old age they sleep with their fathers, that is to say, with the authors who preceded them — and from whom they had stolen.

Whilst I was indulging in these rambling fancies, I had leaned my head against a pile of reverend folios. Whether it was owing to the soporific emanations from these works; or to the profound quiet of the room; or to the lassitude arising from much wandering; or to an unlucky habit of napping at improper times and places, with which I am grievously afflicted, so it was, that I fell into a doze. Still, however, my imagination continued busy, and indeed the same scene remained before my mind's eye, only a little changed in some of the details. I dreamt that the chamber was still decorated with the portraits of ancient authors, but that the number was increased. The long tables had disappeared, and, in place of the sage magi, I beheld a ragged, threadbare throng, such as may be seen plying about the great repository of cast-off clothes, Monmouth Street. Whenever they seized upon a book, by one of those incongruities common to dreams, methought it turned into a garment of foreign or antique fashion, with which they proceeded to equip themselves. I noticed, however, that no one pretended to clothe himself

from any particular suit, but took a sleeve from one, a cape from another, a skirt from a third, thus decking himself out piecemeal, while some of his original rags would peep out from among his borrowed finery.

There was a portly, rosy, well-fed parson, whom I observed ogling several mouldy polemical writers through an eye-glass. He soon contrived to slip on the voluminous mantle of one of the old fathers, and, having purloined the gray beard of another, endeavoured to look exceedingly wise; but the smirking commonplace of his countenance set at nought all the trappings of wisdom. One sickly-looking gentleman was busy embroidering a very flimsy garment with the gold thread drawn out of several old court-dresses of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Another had trimmed himself magnificently from an illuminated manuscript, had stuck a nosegay in his bosom, culled from "The Paradise of Daintie Devices," and having put Sir Philip Sidney's hat on one side of his head, strutted off with an exquisite air of vulgar elegance. A third, who was but of puny dimensions, had bolstered himself out bravely with the spoils from several obscure tracts of philosophy, so that he had a very imposing front; but he was lamentably tattered in rear, and I perceived that he had patched his small-clothes with scraps of parchment from a Latin author.

There were some well-dressed gentlemen, it is

true, who only helped themselves to a gem or so, which sparkled among their own ornaments, without eclipsing them. Some, too, seemed to contemplate the costumes of the old writers, merely to imbibe their principles of taste, and to catch their air and spirit; but I grieve to say, that too many were apt to array themselves from top to toe in the patchwork manner I have mentioned. I shall not omit to speak of one genius, in drab breeches and gaiters, and an Arcadian hat, who had a violent propensity to the pastoral, but whose rural wanderings had been confined to the classic haunts of Primrose Hill, and the solitudes of the Regent's Park. He had decked himself in wreathes and ribbons from all the old pastoral poets, and, hanging his head on one side, went about with a fantastical lack-a-daisical air, "babbling about green fields." But the personage that most struck my attention was a pragmatistical old gentleman in clerical robes, with a remarkably large and square, but bald head. He entered the room wheezing and puffing, elbowed his way through the throng, with a look of sturdy self-confidence, and having laid hands upon a thick Greek quarto, clapped it upon his head, and swept majestically away in a formidable frizzled wig.

In the height of this literary masquerade, a cry suddenly resounded from every side, of "Thieves! thieves!" I looked, and lo! the portraits about the

wall became animated! The old authors thrust out, first a head, then a shoulder, from the canvas, looked down curiously, for an instant, upon the motley throng, and then descended with fury in their eyes, to claim their rifled property. The scene of scampering and hubbub that ensued baffles all description. The unhappy culprits endeavoured in vain to escape with their plunder. On one side might be seen half a dozen old monks, stripping a modern professor; on another, there was sad devastation carried into the ranks of modern dramatic writers. Beaumont and Fletcher, side by side, raged round the field like Castor and Pollux, and sturdy Ben Jonson enacted more wonders than when a volunteer with the army in Flanders. As to the dapper little compiler of farragos, mentioned sometime since, he had arrayed himself in as many patches and colors as Harlequin, and there was as fierce a contention of claimants about him, as about the dead body of Patroclus. I was grieved to see many men, to whom I had been accustomed to look up with awe and reverence, fain to steal off with scarce a rag to cover their nakedness. Just then my eye was caught by the pragmatistical old gentleman of the Greek grizzled wig, who was scrambling away in sore affright with half a score of authors in full cry after him! They were close upon his haunches: in a twinkling off went his wig;

at every turn some strip of raiment was peeled away; until in a few moments, from his domineering pomp, he shrunk into a little, pursy, "chopped bald shot," and made his exit with only a few tags and rags fluttering at his back.

There was something so ludicrous in the catastrophe of this learned Theban, that I burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, which broke the whole illusion. The tumult and the scuffle were at an end. The chamber resumed its usual appearance. The old authors shrunk back into their picture-frames, and hung in shadowy solemnity along the walls. In short, I found myself wide awake in my corner, with the whole assemblage of book-worms gazing at me with astonishment. Nothing of the dream had been real but my burst of laughter, a sound never before heard in that grave sanctuary, and so abhorrent to the ears of wisdom, as to electrify the fraternity.

The librarian now stepped up to me, and demanded whether I had a card of admission. At first I did not comprehend him, but I soon found that the library was a kind of literary "preserve," subject to game-laws, and that no one must presume to hunt there without special license and permission. In a word, I stood convicted of being an arrant poacher, and was glad to make a precipitate retreat, lest I should have a whole pack of authors let loose upon me. — *The Sketch Book*.

ON IMMORTALITY

JOSEPH ADDISON

. . . Quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignis,
Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere vetustas.—*Ovid.*

ARISTOTLE tells us, that the World is a Copy or Transcript of those Ideas which are in the Mind of the first Being; and that those Ideas which are in the Mind of Man, are a Transcript of the World: To this we may add, that Words are the Transcript of those Ideas which are in the Mind of Man, and that Writing or Printing are the Transcript of Words.

As the supreme Being has expressed, and as it were printed his Ideas in the Creation, Men express their Ideas in Books, which by this great Invention of these latter Ages may last as long as the Sun and Moon, and perish only in the general Wreck of Nature. Thus *Cowley* in his Poem on the Resurrection, mentioning the Destruction of the Universe, has those admirable Lines.

Now all the wide-extended Sky,
And all th' harmonious Worlds on high,
And Virgil's sacred Work shall die.

There is no other Method of fixing those Thoughts which arise and disappear in the Mind of Man,

and transmitting them to the last Periods of Time; no other Method of giving a Permanency to our Ideas, and preserving the Knowledge of any particular Person, when his Body is mixed with the common Mass or Matter, and his Soul retired into the World of Spirits. Books are the Legacies that a great Genius leaves to Mankind, which are delivered down from Generation to Generation, as Presents to the Posterity of those who are yet unborn.

All other Arts of perpetuating our Ideas continue but a short Time: Statues can last but a few Thousands of Years, Edifices fewer, and Colours still fewer than Edifices. Michael Angelo, Fontana, and Raphael, will hereafter be what Phidias, Vitruvius, and Apelles are at present; the Names of great Statuaries, Architects, and Painters whose Works are lost. The several Arts are expressed in mouldering Materials; Nature sinks under them, and is not able to support the Ideas which are imprest upon it.

The Circumstance which gives Authors an Advantage above all these great Masters, is this, that they can multiply their Originals; or rather can make Copies of their Works, to what Number they please, which shall be as valuable as the Originals themselves. This gives a great Author something like a Prospect of Eternity, but at the same Time

deprives him of those other Advantages which Artists meet with. The Artist finds greater Returns in Profit, as the Author in Fame. What an inestimable Price would a Virgil or a Homer, a Cicero or an Aristotle bear, were their Works like a Statue, a Building, or a Picture, or to be confined only in one Place, and made the Property of a single Person?

If writings are thus durable, and may pass from Age to Age throughout the whole Course of Time, how careful should an Author be of committing anything to Print that may corrupt Posterity, and poyson the Minds of Men with Vice and Errour? Writers of great Talents, who employ their Parts in propagating Immortality, and seasoning vicious Sentiments with Wit and Humour, are to be looked upon as the Pests of Society and the Enemies of Mankind: They leave Books behind them (as it is said of those who die in Distempers which breed an ill Will towards their own Species) to scatter Infection and destroy their Posterity. They act the Counter-parts of a Confucius or a Socrates; and seem to have been sent into the World to deprave human Nature, and sink it into the Condition of Brutality.

I have seen some Roman-Catholick Authors, who tell us that vicious Writers continue in Purgatory so long as the Influence of their Writings continues upon Posterity: For Purgatory, say they, is

nothing else but a cleansing us of our Sins, which cannot be said to be done away, so long as they continue to operate and corrupt Mankind. The vicious Author, say they, sins after Death, and so long as he continues to sin, so long must he expect to be punished. Though the Roman-Catholick Notion of Purgatory be indeed very ridiculous, one cannot but think that if the Soul after Death has any Knowledge of what passes in this World, that of an immoral Writer would receive much more Regret from the Sense of corrupting, than Satisfaction from the Thought of pleasing his surviving Admirers.

To take off from the Severity of this Speculation, I shall conclude this Paper with a story of an Atheistical Author, who at the time when he lay dangerously sick and had desired the Assistance of a neighbouring Curate, confessed to him with great Contrition, that nothing sat more heavy at his Heart than the Sense of his having seduced the Age by his Writings, and that their evil Influence was likely to continue even after his Death. The Curate upon further Examination finding the Penitent in the utmost agonies of Despair, and being himself a Man of Learning, told him, that he hoped his Case was not so desperate as he apprehended, since he found that he was so very sensible of his Fault, and so sincerely repented of it. The Peni-

tent still urged the evil Tendency of his Books to subvert all Religion, and the little Ground for Hope there could be for one whose Writings would continue to do Mischief when his Body was laid in Ashes. The Curate finding no other way to comfort him, told him, that he did well in being afflicted for the evil Design with which he published his Book; but that he ought to be very thankful that there was no Danger of its doing any Hurt. That his Cause was so very bad and his Arguments so weak, that he did not apprehend any ill Effects of it. In short, that he might rest satisfied his Book could do no more Mischief after his Death, than it had done whilst he was living. To which he added, to his further Satisfaction, that he did not believe any besides his particular Friends and Acquaintance had ever been at the Pains of reading it, or that any Body after his Death would enquire after it. The dying Man had still so much the Frailty of an Author in him, as to be cut to the Heart with these Consolations; and without answering the good Man, asked his Friends about him (with the Peevishness that is natural to a sick Person) where they had picked up such a Block-head? And whether they thought him a proper Person to attend one in his Condition? The Curate finding that the Author did not expect to be dealt with as a real and sincere Penitent, but as a Penitent of

Importance, after a short Admonition withdrew; not questioning but he should be again sent for if the Sickness grew desperate. The author however recovered, and has since written two or three other Tracts with the same Spirit, and very luckily for his poor Soul, with the same Success.

— *The Spectator*, No. 166.

THE BODY
OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
Printer,
(Like the cover of an old book,
its contents torn out,
and stript of its lettering and gilding)
lies here food for worms;
yet the work itself shall not be lost,
for it will (as he believed) appear once more
in a new
and more beautiful edition,
BY
THE AUTHOR

FINIS

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